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PRISONER OF WAR RECORDS ONLINE

BRITAIN'S BESTSELLING FAMILY HISTORY MAGAZINE

ISSUE 228 MARCH 2025 £5.75

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The best websites for historic maps and how to use them

**5** expert tips for tracing your **FEMALE LINE**

My great great grandfather survived a murder attempt

**STEP-BY-STEP**
Make adding records to your tree easier

**HOUSE HISTORY**
How to find old title deeds and what they will tell you

**ALSO IN THIS ISSUE**

- Find your Northern Ireland kin
- How the blind fought for their rights
- Your genealogy questions answered

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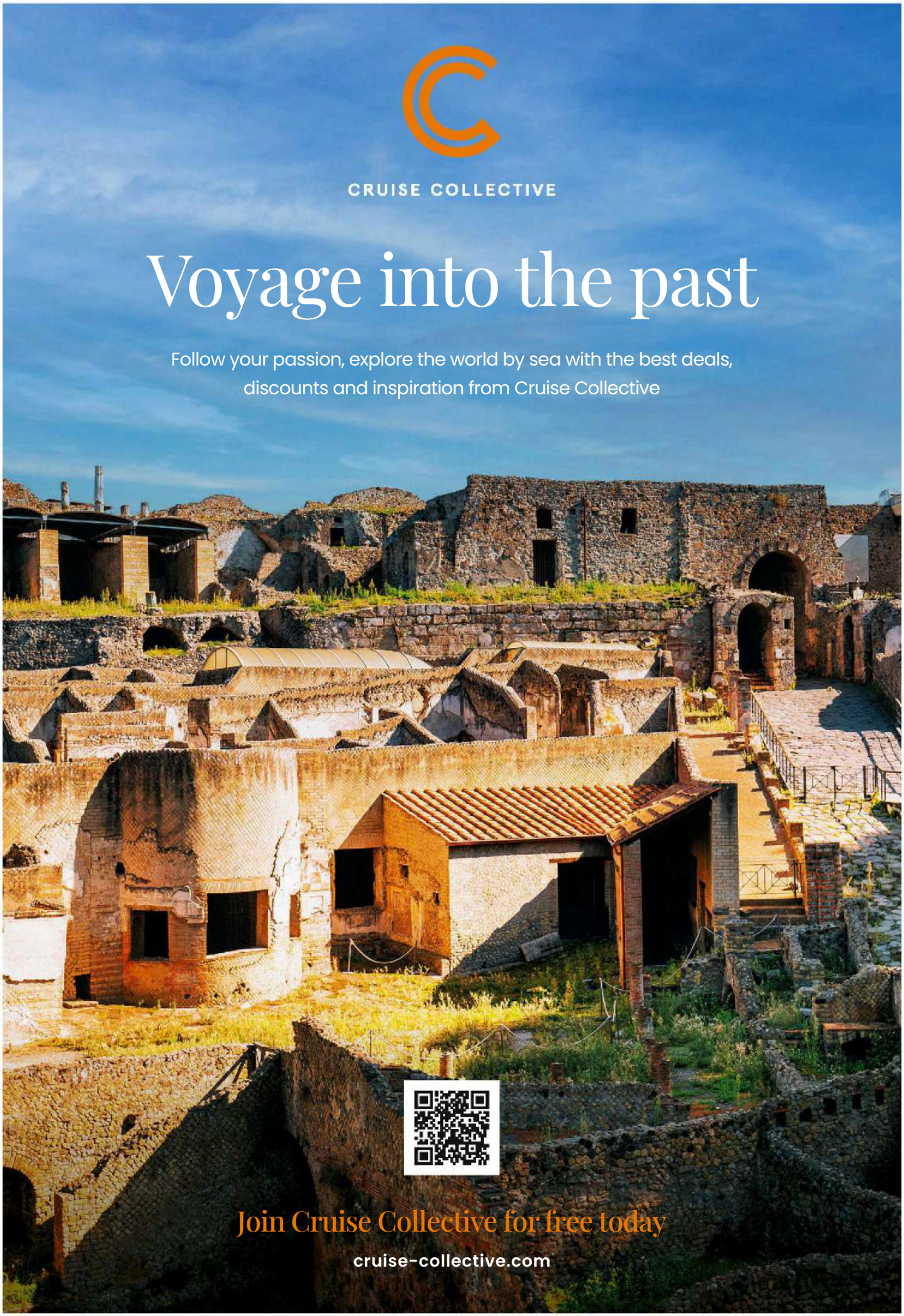

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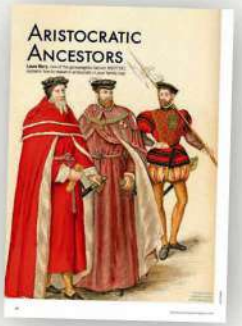
# Welcome

## Sarah's Top Tip

**Check out the gentlemen in your tree to see if they lead you to royalty**




I know that links to the royal family aren't as big a motivator as they used to be for family historians. Changing attitudes, along with a wealth of records – such as newspapers – that feature people from all walks of society, have resulted in a shift in what people like to focus on. However, Laura's article on **page 28** has tempted me to go back to my notes and look again at the men recorded as gentlemen on my tree (and their wives). Concentrating on those lines can lead to 'gateway ancestors' – people who have well-documented aristocratic connections that can take your tree back hundreds of years.

The walls of my home office are plastered with maps of Bristol. The oldest dates from 1581 and the most modern is a large, framed Ordnance Survey sheet from 1903 showing the street I live on only half-finished. Maps are an obvious choice for local and house history, but they play a vital role in family history too. Turn to **page 14** for my tips on how to use them to get closer to your roots.

On **page 19** Janet Few shares her advice for researching your female lines, ahead of International Women's Day on 8 March. As Janet says, even where named records are sparse, we can try to flesh out the lives of our female ancestors using other resources. After all, half of our direct forbears were women.

We've also got a guide this month to title deeds (**page 38**). They are hard to track down, not least because survival rates are so patchy, but if you do find one, they are useful for both house and family history. The example shown in the article is from the house I grew up in, so it's a bit of my own personal history.

Finally, I found Caroline Roberts' article on blindness fascinating (**page 56**). Many of us may come across blind relatives in our research, because the disability was often recorded on the census. I hope our article helps put their lives into context. Happy hunting!

Sarah

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## Contributors

### Janet Few
Genealogist, writer and tutor, Janet Few (**thehistoryinterpreter.com**) likes to focus on the stories of 'forgotten women'. Her advice on **page 19** will inspire you to do the same.

### Laura Berry
Laura has been one of the lead genealogists for the TV series for many years. Her tips for tracing royal lines on **page 28** may just give you your own *WDYTYA?* moment.

### Caroline Roberts
A London-based writer who specialises in social history, Caroline highlights the struggles faced by the blind on **page 56** and how campaigners fought for better support.

COVER IMAGE: GETTY IMAGES/TWO CYCLISTS READING A MAP, C1930

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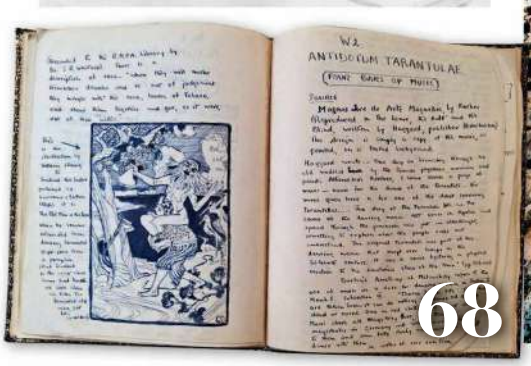


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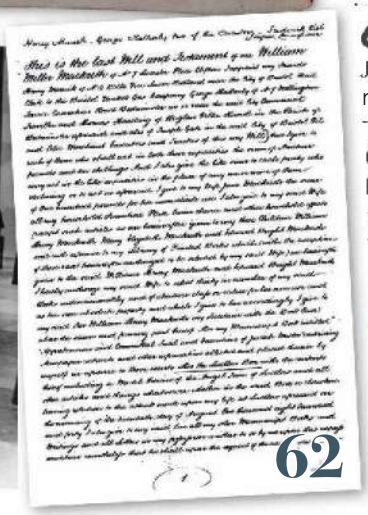


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UNP/TIM KAVANAGH / GETTY IMAGES

# Letters

**Email** *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk* **Write to** *WDYTYA? Magazine*, Eagle House, Bristol BS1 4ST

## Coming Full Circle

Here is a story of how my interest in family history brought me in a full circle, and helped me gain a sense of belonging.

I lived my early years in the rural village of Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog, which is deep in the Ceiriog Valley in North-East Wales. My parents had moved there from North-West Wales, where both had grown up. My father was appointed the headteacher of the village school which rarely had more than 25 pupils, one of which was myself. We moved away from the village when I was just six years old, but I still have fond memories of our time there – the carnival, the eisteddfod, the kindest of neighbours, and even falling into the stream by the village hall!

When growing up, I always had an interest in family history and the concept of family. I remember my father explaining to me at a very young age that some of our dear neighbours whom I'd refer to as aunties or uncles weren't in fact related, but just called that as a sign of how close we were as a community. I then remember being given a pocket-sized children's book about the history of British kings and queens. At the back was a diagram of the royal family tree, and it wasn't long until I had written my own basic tree of three generations.

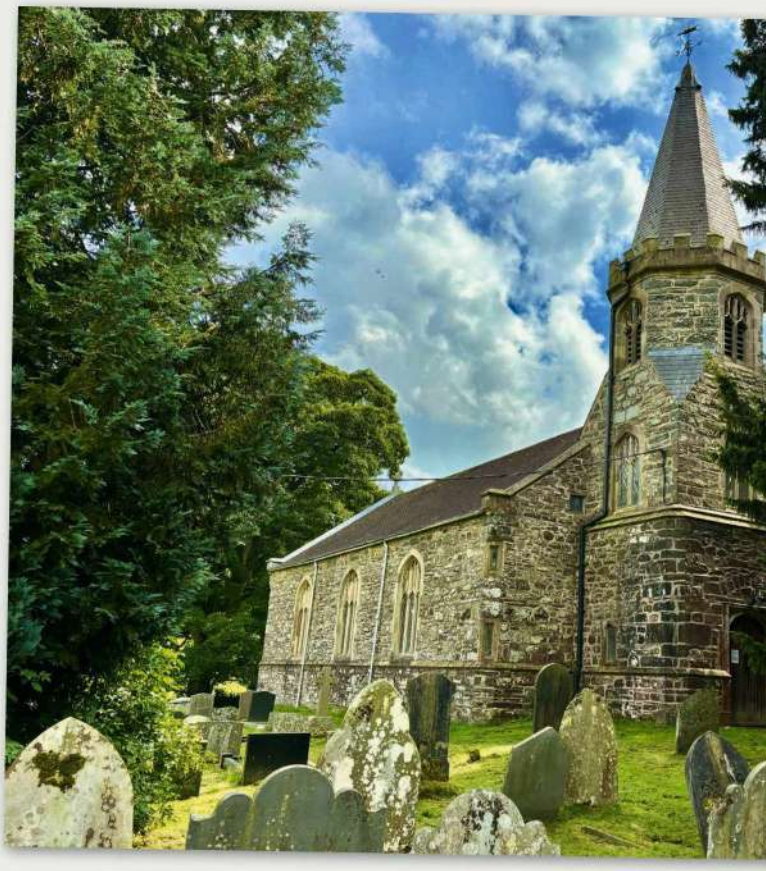
In my teens, a distant relative had compiled a family tree for one of my great grandmother's family. I then went on to hand-write and catalogue all the names in my own booklet, which I still have today.

Despite all this interest in my own family history, there was something I felt that was missing in my life. I had grown up in Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog, and then in the village of Rhosllanerchrugog, both of which I had no family ties to. My parents were from Bala and Llanberis, where I had lots of family, but I had never lived in those places myself. I had such a loving family and the greatest of friends, but I felt there was a sense of belonging to a place missing in my life. There is a Welsh word *cynefin*. It translates as 'habitat', but I always feel that its meaning is deeper and conveys a strong sense of belonging to somewhere. This is what I felt was missing in my life… until I started going in depth with my family tree.

In my late twenties I began a subscription to Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**), and soon enough my tree was growing. My initial mission was to grow the tree as far back in time as I could. But over time, my focus changed. I wanted to know more about where family members were born, where they lived and worked, and where they had been laid to rest. And it was with this change in focus that I made discoveries that started to help me fill in the blanks with my own sense of belonging.

I had been researching online for over 10 years when I returned to the tree that I had hand-catalogued as a teenager. I had initially thought that my great grandmother's family lived on a farm in Mid-Wales, but now realised that the farm was actually located high in the hills between the Ceiriog Valley and Tanat Valley. They lived less than four miles from where I grew up.

Through studying this branch, I discovered that my great grandmother's brother had



been killed in the First World War, and her other brothers and sisters had scattered around Mid-Wales and towards Bala to live. But then I made the biggest discovery yet. By researching parish records, I found that my 3x great grandfather, David Jones, had been buried in St Garmon's Church in… Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog.

Now I had a new mission: I was determined to visit and follow my family's journey in person. And in August 2024, I set out to spend the day visiting four locations that have shaped my family's journey.

My journey started at St Dogfan's Church in Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant where my great grand uncle's name, David Charles Jones, is engraved on the village war memorial.

Then I travelled up the hills towards the tiny church of St Garmon in the isolated parish of Llanarmon Mynydd Mawr. Here I found the grave of another 3x great grandfather, Charles Edwards, and my 3x great grandmother, Ann Edwards.

The next stop was deep in the hills where I found the old family farm of Buarthyre, where my great grandmother, Mary Emily Jones, and her family lived.

Finally, my last stop was St Garmon's Church in Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog. As I searched for the grave of my 3x great grandfather, David Jones, I realised that a lot of graves had eroded or had been felled or broken by the elements over time. I began to lose hope that I'd find the grave, but still took comfort that my direct ancestor was here somewhere. I reached the back of the church, where

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St Garmon's Church in Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog, the final stop on Dyfan's quest

there was one grave that was an obelisk rather than a headstone, and the name faced towards the side of the valley rather than down the valley towards the elements like the other headstones. The name read, "David Jones 1816–1873". It was my 3x great grandfather!

I took a few moments to myself to gather my thoughts and emotions. I had finally found that missing place of belonging in my life. I had gone full circle back to where I was brought up to find it was actually the place where my ancestors were born, lived, worked, and laid to rest. I had finally found my *cynefin*.

**Dyfan Gwyn Jones, by email**

Editor Replies **What a wonderful discovery Dyfan, and so beautifully written. I'm glad you found your *cynefin*.**

Chris shared this photo from Edward Beckham's marriage to Chris' relation Winnie (he is the small child at the front) along with a clipping showing William (middle row, second from left) and his brother Jack (middle row, far right) on parade

## Beckham Bravery

In a letter in your January issue, Jeremy Baker referenced the boating tragedy in which David Beckham's great grandfather Edward Beckham, by his first marriage to Queenie Eldridge, survived. In fact, this was a day of heroism amidst the tragedy and a story that has not been told.

Edward's second marriage was to my father's sister Winnie. I have included a wedding photograph that shows a very small me, second from the left on the front row. If anyone recognises any of the Beckhams in the photograph, I would love to hear from them.

Uncle Teddie was a wise-cracking cockney, and one of the funniest men I knew. However, on the long drive from Somerset to Sheffield for my grandmother's funeral, he told me the sad tale of that day in 1912.

Twenty-six boys had happily set off from Walworth the day before for their summer camp at the Isle of Sheppey. Following an overnight stop at Erith, everything seemed to be progressing well until, just short of their destination, a sudden violent squall blew up and capsized their boat nearly two miles from shore.

Edward was 10 years old, and a non-swimmer. Thrown into the sea, Edward was desperately floundering in the fast tides when his 12-year-old brother William rescued him and helped him back to the upturned boat, where he clung on until the lifeboat arrived. William then swam back to help other scouts who were swiftly being blown away. Sadly, William soon lost the strength to save himself and drowned. A third brother, Jack, also survived.

The story received widespread national and local press coverage as witnessed by the front page of the *Daily Mirror* of 6 August, which shows a photo of William and Jack on parade.

William's story was one of many tales of heroism on this tragic day, but if he had not sacrificed himself to save his brother, then the English football team would have been deprived of one of its future captains.

**Chris Carver, Caistor, Lincolnshire**

Editor Replies **Thank you for sharing your family's connection to such a tragic story. It must have been so hard for your Uncle Teddie to have lived with the loss of his brother.**

**Louie Lingard responded to our guide to tracing Canadian relations: tinyurl.com/wdytya-can-cen**
My gran (born 1879) wrote to her cousins when they emigrated, and my mum wrote to the next generation. I visited Canada when I was a young adult and later with my daughters. Some of the relatives visit us from time to time.

## Some Timely Advice

In Lorraine Taylor's letter in the February issue she requested that one of your contributors create a timeline of general events in the UK to help researchers.

May I draw your readers' attention to the timeline that Neil Bertram and I put together that was published by Pen & Sword in 2021? *Tracing Your Ancestors Using the UK Historical Timeline* includes columns that are dedicated to social and cultural events in addition to dates pertaining to the monarchy, the state and the church.

So the task is already done!

**Angela Smith, by email**

**Editor Replies Thanks for writing in Angela, and sorry for not flagging up the book in the issue. We've had a few readers write in to recommend it.**

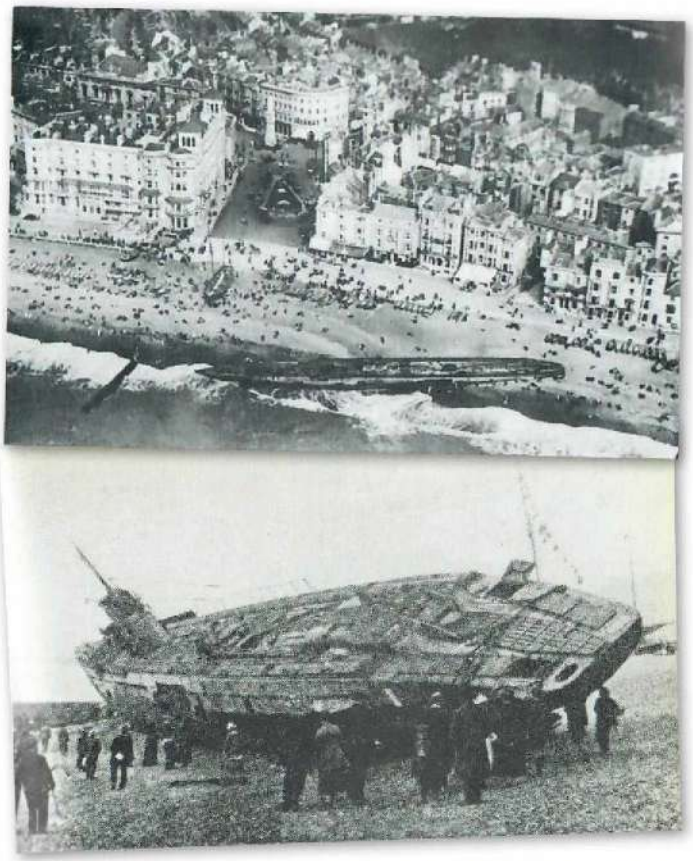
## Naturalisation Tip

Can I share a tip with readers regarding Paul Blake's 'Record Masterclass' on naturalisation in the February issue?

The National Archives' HO 405 records, 'Home Office: Aliens Department and Successors: Aliens Personal Files, Applications for Naturalisation', include details of not only the individuals but family members and the people who supported their application, with checks made by MI5 and the local police for criminal convictions and any other information that might stop their naturalisation being granted. For those who suffered under the Nazis there may be more records in FO 950, 'Foreign Office: Claims Department: Correspondence and Claims Files'.

Alas the series is catalogued on TNA's Discovery (**discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**) by only their surname and the initial letter(s) of their Christian names and no date of birth (despite these details being in the files).

However, series HO 334, 'Home Office: Immigration and Nationality Department: Duplicate Certificates of Naturalisation, Declarations of British Nationality, and Declarations of Alienage', has the Home Office file number listed on the certificate (which are not online), which can be matched with the file number listed in HO 405 on the catalogue.
**David Matthew, by email**



Top: a possible composite photo purported to show U-118 on Hastings Beach
Above: residents surround the stranded German submarine to get a closer look

**Editor Replies Thank you David. I hope this helps anyone looking for naturalisation records.**

## Stranded Sub

It was a nice surprise to see my letter about Hastings and the photo of the large-sailed pleasure boat *The New Albertine* in your Christmas issue. On showing the magazine to my son he said, "Why didn't you tell them about the submarine that came ashore in virtually the same place?" He was right as it is another piece of the history of Hastings.

The town awoke on 15 April 1919 to find a German submarine had been stranded on the beach. U-118 had been allocated to France as one of the spoils of the First World War, but had broken its tow in rough seas while being taken from Harwich to Cherbourg for use by the French Navy. When the tow rope snapped, the submarine was washed ashore.

U-118 became a tourist attraction. There were schemes for placing it on display in Warrior Square, but they were rejected. The submarine was later broken up in situ, except for the keel. This was uncovered by the tide in the 1950s, and broken up as well. To this day people say that they have found pieces of the submarine on the beach.
**Robert Crouch, by email**

**Editor Replies Thanks Robert. I bet that gave the residents of Hastings plenty to talk about.**

**@Vere15th commented on an article about maiden names (tinyurl.com/wdytya-maiden)**
We are fortunate because of the Irish Protestant tradition of using maiden names as first and middle names – more kids, more recorded history.

**YOUR LETTER IN PRINT** We reserve the right to edit any letters sent to the magazine. Messages posted to our Facebook wall and tweets sent to us may also appear in print. The choice of Star Letter is the editor's and the prize is subject to change.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HASTINGS IN OLD PHOTOGRAPHS: A SECOND SELECTION BY PAMELA HAINES (SUTTON, 1991) / HASTINGS: A PICTORIAL HISTORY BY D ROBERT ELLERAY (PHILLIMORE & CO, 1979)

# What's On

**Email** *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk* to feature your event here for free

## PICK OF THE MONTH

The biggest event in family history returns

### RootsTech 2025

**6–8 March**
w **familysearch.org/en/rootstech/**

Ndaba Mandela and Lynne M Jackson will speak at RootsTech

RootsTech, the world's largest family history show, takes place every year in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. Since 2023 it has been a hybrid event, with the opportunity to take part online from anywhere in the world for free. The keynote speakers include Ndaba Mandela, the grandson of Nelson Mandela, and Lynne M Jackson, the great great granddaughter of Dred and Harriet Scott, an enslaved couple who unsuccessfully took their case for freedom to the US Supreme Court in 1857. There will also be more than 200 sessions in over 26 languages, with classes on all aspects of family history from countries across the globe, including the roles of DNA testing and AI in genealogy. Online free, in-person $79 for one day or $129 for three days.

## IN PERSON

### Before And After Coal: Images And Voices from Scotland's Mining Communities

**Until 20 April**
a Kirkcaldy Galleries
t 01592 583206
w **onfife.com/exhibitions/before-after-coal/**

In 1982, US photographer Milton Rogovin visited Scotland to photograph miners at their pits. Four decades after the Miners' Strike of 1984–1985, artist Nicky Bird has updated Rogovin's reportage by meeting individuals and families connected with the original photos. Free.

### London In The Second World War

**Until 30 October**
a The London Archives
t 020 7332 3820
w **thelondonarchives.org/visit-us/exhibitions/london-in-the-second-world-war**

This exhibition tells the story of life for Londoners during the war using bomb-damage maps, diaries, artwork and atmospheric photographs. Free.

### Heritage Course: House History For Beginners

**25 February**
a Eastwood House, Giffnock
e *artsandheritage@eculturandleisure.org*
w **tinyurl.com/kinnaird-house**

In this half-day course Lorna Kinnaird will explain the records required to uncover the history of a house in Scotland. £35.

### History In Focus – Maps

**28 February**
a Norfolk Record Office, Norwich
t 01603 222599
w **tinyurl.com/eventbrite-nro-maps**

Find out more about the different maps available at Norfolk Record Office with this 90-minute workshop. Pay what you can.

### Spitalfields Through The Ages

**2 March**
a Dartford Science and Technology College
t 01322 527604
w **tinyurl.com/nwkfhs-spitalfields**

John Halligan shares the history of the migrant groups who have settled in Spitalfields, including Huguenot silk weavers. Free to North West Kent Family History Society members, non-members asked to make a small donation.

### None So Queer As Folk

**3 March**
a Roxeth Community Church, South Harrow
e *raynerslanebranch@lwmfhs.org*
w **lwmfhs.org/event/none-so-queer-as-folk/**

Most communities have their own traditions, peculiarities and dialects. In this talk Ian Waller puts examples into context. Free to members of the London Westminster & Middlesex Family History Society, otherwise £5.

### Family History Day

**8 March**
a Bath Central Library
t 01225 394041
w **baneslibraries.co.uk**

Join experts from Bath Record Office and Bristol & Avon Family History Society to help you get started with your research. Free.

### The Family History Show Midlands

**15 March**
a Severn Hall, Malvern
w **thefamilyhistoryshow.com/midlands**

This event includes talks, one-to-one expert consultations, and an exhibition hall. £8 in advance (two for £14), £12 on the day.

### Life In The WRNS

**17 March**
a Fromus Centre, Saxmundham
w **avsfhg.org.uk/events/our-talks**

Manette Baillie will talk about her experiences in the Women's Royal Naval Service. £1 for Alde Valley Suffolk Family History Group members, otherwise £3.

## ONLINE

### The Story Of Europe's Medieval Jewish Communities

**26 February**
w **tinyurl.com/eventbrite-tna-miri**

Prof Miri Rubin will discuss the rich history of Europe's medieval Jewish communities at this event from The National Archives. Pay what you can, £5 recommended.

### Women In Military And Wartime

**22 March**
w **tinyurl.com/sog-women-war**

This one-day event from the Society of Genealogists includes talks from the likes of Graham Bandy, Clare Wilson and Emma Jolly – plus a copy of Jolly's book *My Ancestor Was a Woman at War*. Members £60, non-members £75, non-members plus overseas postage £81.

## BOOK AHEAD

Learn more about your Scottish roots at this summer school

### Ken Your Kin

**4–11 June**
a University of Strathclyde, Glasgow
t 0141 548 2116
w **www.strath.ac.uk/studywithus/centreforlifelonglearning/genealogy/kenyourkin/**

The Strathclyde Institute for Genealogical Studies has announced a summer school on Scottish history and family history, featuring talks by genealogists, museum curators and historians, and visits to locations including the Scotland's People Centre. £1,000.

ROOTSTECH

# News

**Rosemary Collins** reports on the latest data releases and genealogy news

# Wiener Holocaust Library puts collections online

**The Wiener Holocaust Library (wiener holocaustlibrary.org), one of the largest Holocaust archives in the world, has created an online portal offering free access to more than 150,000 items from its collections.**

Wiener Digital Collections (**whl collections.org**) was launched on 27 January 2025, Holocaust Memorial Day and the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.

The library said that it plans to upload more material to the website at a rate of 100,000 items a year.

The library was founded in Amsterdam by Dr Alfred Wiener in 1934 as the Jewish Central Information Office, in order to gather information on the persecution of Jews in Germany. Dr Wiener fled to Britain in 1938, and the library is now based in London.

Its director Dr Toby Simpson said, "The Wiener Holocaust Library's collections were gathered with an unparalleled urgency. For the Jewish refugees who built our archives, documentation was often a matter of life and death. The importance of our mission, to serve as a library of record of the Holocaust, has hardly receded since then. The need to defend the truth has been given new urgency by the resurgence of antisemitism and other forms of misinformation and hatred.

"Wiener Digital Collections provides a keystone resource. By placing a wealth of evidence freely available online we are ensuring that the historical record is available for all regardless of their location, prior knowledge or means."

The collections on the website include photographs of Auschwitz; authenticated copies and translations into English of documents from the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials relating to the fate of Europe's Jews, which were donated to the library by the trial authorities as a quid pro quo for assistance provided to the prosecutors; material about fascist and antifascist movements in the UK, including documents relating to the 1936 Battle of Cable Street in the East End of London, the rise of Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists, and Jewish groups that organised against the far right in Britain both before and after the Second World War; and almost 500 *Tarnschriften*, or 'hidden writings'. These anti-Nazi pamphlets were distributed within Nazi Germany, disguised as adverts for cosmetics or shampoo, recipe books and even instruction manuals for housewives.

Material from The Wiener Holocaust Library's collections is now available online for the first time

**The need to defend the truth has been given new urgency**

Dan Stone, professor of modern history at Royal Holloway, University of London, and director of its Holocaust Research Institute (**tinyurl.com/rh-hri**), commented, "By making accessible many of the library's institutional files, including correspondence and internal documents, the Wiener Holocaust Library has placed at researchers' fingertips a vast and fascinating resource."

"Whether researching the history of archives, postwar trials, restitution or the history of the Holocaust itself, the online availability of these documents on a user-friendly website is a boon to scholarship," he added.

THE WIENER HOLOCAUST LIBRARY

## NEWS IN BRIEF

A pair of archaeologists at work on the site

### DNA testing reveals role of women in Iron Age Britain

A DNA study of ancient skeletons has highlighted the important role that women played in British society during the Iron Age. Archaeologists from Bournemouth University (**bournemouth.ac.uk**) and geneticists from Trinity College Dublin (**tcd.ie**) analysed remains buried at Winterborne Kingston in Dorset between 100 BCE and AD 100. They found that the site was the cemetery of a large family group who mostly traced their maternal lineage to a single woman. This suggests that husbands joined their wives' communities upon marriage.

Nathan Alterman's 1934 marriage record

### MyHeritage releases 428,426 Israeli marriage and divorce records

Family history website MyHeritage (**myheritage.com**) has added 428,426 marriage and divorce records sourced from the Israel State Archives and dating back to 1919. The Hebrew names in the records are transliterated to make them easier to search. A number of famous Israelis can be found in the records. For example, they include the marriage of Nathan Alterman and Rachel Marcus on 22 August 1934. Alterman (1910–1970) was a playwright, poet, journalist, translator and political activist.

# Memorial to South African servicemen unveiled

**A memorial to the South African servicemen who died fighting for the British Empire in the First World War has been unveiled in Cape Town.**

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission's (CWGC's) memorial commemorates 1,772 men, mainly black, who worked in non-combatant roles, including as porters, wagon drivers and on the railways.

In 2021, the CWGC apologised for its failures to commemorate black and Asian casualties of the war.

The Cape Town Labour Corps Memorial (**tinyurl.com/cwgc-cape-town**) consists of timber posts engraved with each serviceman's name. It is also engraved with wording from a new poem, *your legacies are preserved here*, by Koleka Putuma and Daljit Nagra.

Claire Horton, director general of the CWGC, commented, "This landmark memorial, designed and built collaboratively in South Africa, testifies to our shared global history and responsibility to honour all those who gave their lives in service."

Elliot Malunga Delihlazo, a retired teacher whose great uncle Bhesengile Delihlazo is commemorated, said, "It makes us proud really, that at last, we can be one of the families that people can talk about in the due course of history. That we have made a mark, not just any mark, but an indelible mark."

Top: Sindiswa Mabadi at the opening ceremony; above: the memorial was inaugurated by the Princess Royal

## CAN YOU HELP?

Volunteers in Leiston and Sizewell in Suffolk are working on a project to commemorate people who served in the area in the world wars, ahead of the 80th anniversary of VE Day on 8 May 2025. This could include individuals serving in the armed forces, reserved occupations or organisations such as the Home Guard, Women's Land Army and Air Raid Precautions. The organisers of the project are looking for stories and photographs of individuals that will be published in a book or folder. If you have a relation or friend who was in the area during either war, please email *a_skelcher@hotmail.com* using the subject line "Wartime Memories", or get in touch using the Facebook page of Leiston-cum-Sizewell Town Council located at **facebook.com/Leistontowncouncil**.

Leiston War Memorial in the churchyard of St Margaret of Antioch Parish Church

BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY / COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION / A SKELCHER

# TheGenealogist adds six million directory records

**Family history website TheGenealogist (thegenealogist.co.uk) has added 39 directories dating from 1935–1940, containing records of more than six million individuals and businesses.**

They include the popular Kelly's directories, as well as telephone directories and Post Office directories, covering 25 English counties.

The record of Agatha Christie under the name "Mrs Mallowan" in a directory from 1935

"This release represents a significant milestone in our ongoing commitment to providing comprehensive historical records to genealogists and family historians," said Mark Bayley, TheGenealogist's head of online development.

"These directories offer a unique glimpse into the lives of people and businesses operating during the outbreak of the Second World War," he added.

The records include famous figures. For example, the 1935 *Kelly's Directory of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire* records the author Agatha Christie living at Winterbrook House in Wallingford, Oxfordshire, as "Mrs Mallowan", following her second marriage to the archaeologist Max Mallowan.

## Ordnance Survey 'Old Series' maps released on NLS's free maps website

This map of Gloucestershire from 1828 is among the set added to NLS's website

The National Library of Scotland (NLS) has added the 'Old Series' of Ordnance Survey (OS) maps to its free maps website (**maps.nls.uk**). The collection of 746 one-inch-to-the-mile maps covers 1801–1869 and is the OS's oldest set of maps of England and Wales. Researchers can access the maps via NLS's Map Viewer, and compare them to other historic map sets.

The new collection also includes the 'Index to Tithe Survey' maps, which form a useful record of boundaries that appear on the tithe surveys of 1837–1850.

**35,749**
The number of pensions records (1898–1912) from Queensland, Australia, that have been added to **findmypast.co.uk**

**George Brewster**
An 11-year-old sweep who died in 1875 has become the youngest person to be commemorated by a blue plaque in England (**tinyurl.com/msn-brewster**)

**10**
The number of volumes of records from the Company of Merchants and Tailors of Morpeth that have been preserved by Northumberland County Council (**tinyurl.com/bbc-morpeth**)

**11.6 bn**
The number of names from old newspapers that have been added to **myheritage.com**, completing the Names & Stories Project

**Romans**
DNA research shows that Romans living in Britain had Viking heritage (**tinyurl.com/nat-news-rom**)

Max Blokzijl at his trial in 1945

# Netherlands publishes database of suspected collaborators with Nazis

**A database containing the names of individuals suspected of collaborating with the Nazi regime in the Netherlands between 1940 and 1945 has been published online.**

The names of about 425,000 people have been added to Oorlog Voor de Rechter ('War in Court'), which is available at **oorlogvoorderechter.nl**.

All of the individuals listed on the website were investigated after the war, although not all of them were convicted.

Hence the inclusion of a name does not necessarily mean that they were a collaborator.

The names are taken from the records of the Central Archives of the Special Jurisdiction at the Dutch National Archives (**nationaalarchief.nl/en**).

They include individuals such as Marius Hugh Louis Wilhelm 'Max' Blokzijl. The Dutch journalist became a supporter of Nazism while working in Berlin. He joined the Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging in Nederland party (National Socialist Movement in the Netherlands, or NSB), and became the 'propaganda chief' of the NSB's puppet regime after the German invasion, editing the newspaper *De Standaard* and broadcasting pro-Nazi radio programmes. He was executed for collaboration in 1946.

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

# It's All In The Genes

**Alan Crosby** takes a bold new step in his research and embraces DNA testing

Well, I finally did it! After years of 'not quite getting round to it', and putting it off until the general quality of the results improved, in November I sent off my little phial of saliva and waited eagerly for the results of my DNA test. This uncharacteristically decisive action was prompted by a visit to Poland in late September, when my cousins and I discussed the results of their recent DNA tests, which were fascinating.

Their father was half-English and half-American, although he was to all intents and purposes Polish (born and bred there, and Polish was his first language). Their mother, however, is fully Polish but with some Austro-German ancestry. The DNA results reflected this complicated inheritance very closely. They have 37–39 per cent "Central and Eastern Europe" inheritance, and 13–20 per cent from "Germanic Europe". This fully corroborates their documentary research, which covers much of Eastern Europe and especially extending to Lwów (Lviv) in what is now Ukraine. They also have a significant percentage of Scottish DNA, through their American grandfather, whose forebears emigrated to the USA from Scotland roughly 200 years ago.

**It's already been intriguing and surprising to find the connections**

Most important, though, from my perspective was that they have 24–29 per cent "England and north-western Europe" DNA, because their grandmother was my grandfather's elder sister.

That evening in Kraków, having discovered the potential of real-life DNA testing, I decided to see what it would tell me about myself. As I anticipated, no sensational surprises were forthcoming. I am 87 per cent "England and north-western Europe", which is what I would have predicted. What of the other 13 per cent? My mother had a Welsh great grandmother, and also an Irish one, and the DNA includes modest but significant elements from those areas. The only surprise was that I am said to have 4 per cent Danish ancestry. This is within the recognised margin of error, but I suspect that this is an ancient genealogical trait.

Much more importantly, the DNA confirmed that my Polish cousins really are my cousins. We never doubted that we were, but this is proof positive of the genetic and genealogical connection. All very satisfactory. But then there are all the other people with whom I have a genetic link – more than 48,000 of them, scattered across the world. Most, of course, are extremely distant connections, but others are from much more recent branches of my family trees, lines that had petered out and can now be updated and extended.

It's already been intriguing and surprising to find the connections. There are two descendants of my great grandfather's younger brother, one of whom lives in a small town in southern Alaska, which is nicely exotic! Many years ago my father drew an outline family tree of his mother's relatives, which extended as far as the 1920s and included some of her first cousins. For various reasons they had completely lost touch with them and, since the surname is quite common, I'd made little headway in finding out more. Now, though, I can add several more of my third cousins to the tree.

And then there are members of my great aunt's family in the prairies of Manitoba. I met some of them long ago when they came to England – their grandmother (my grandma's sister) had gone to Canada in 1921, and died there tragically young in 1935. The family kept in touch sporadically, but since their mother died about 25 years ago contact has been broken. Now I can find out more.

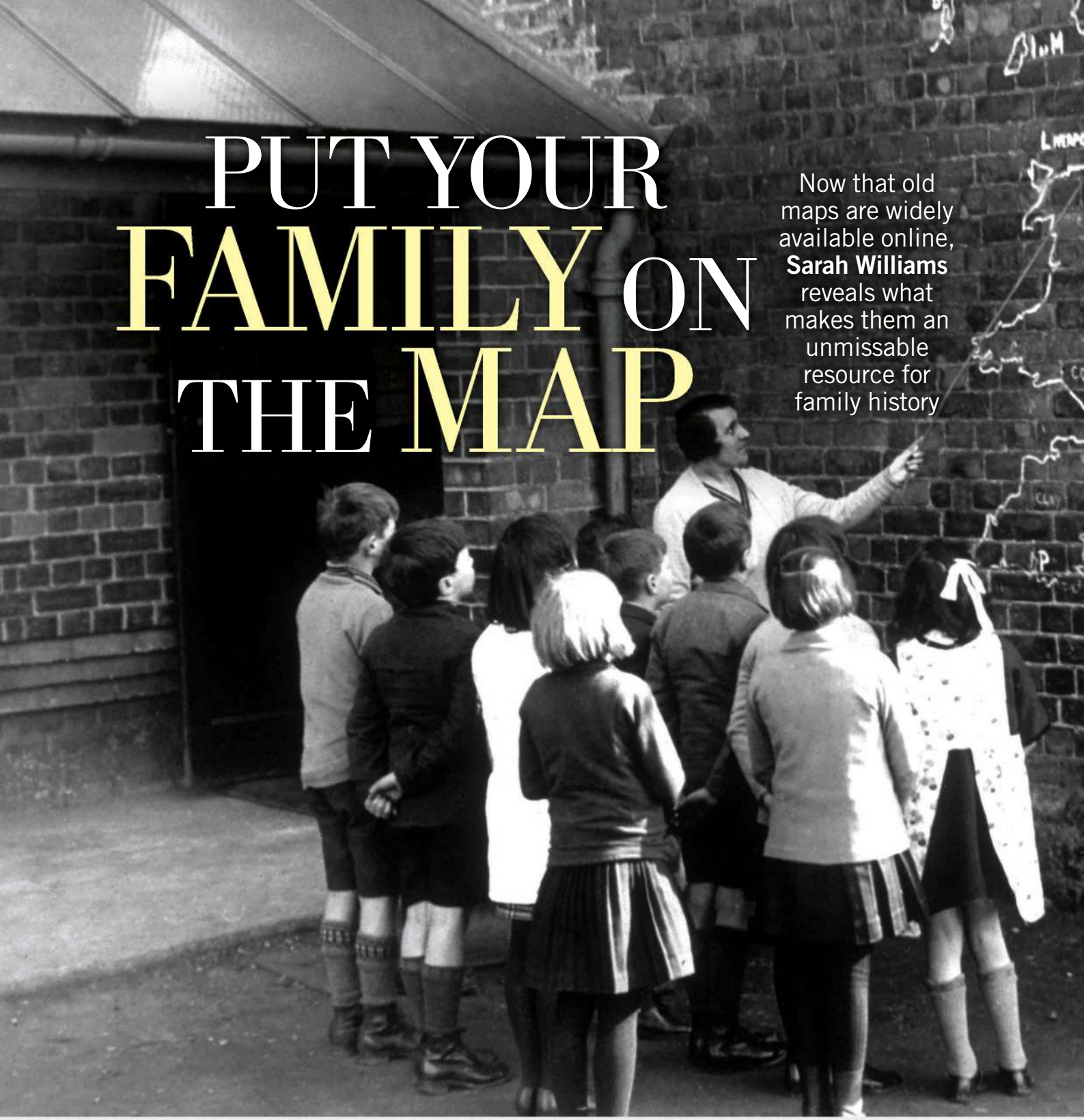
Then there are the descendants of my great grandmother's sister who emigrated to New Zealand in the 1880s… and so on and so forth. Now I only need to find the time to follow it all up, and even science can't help there!

**ALAN CROSBY** lives in Lancashire and is the editor of *The Local Historian*

ILLUSTRATION WWW.SUEGENT.COM

# PUT YOUR FAMILY ON THE MAP

Now that old maps are widely available online, **Sarah Williams** reveals what makes them an unmissable resource for family history



This map was drawn on the wall of a school building in Patrington, Yorkshire, in 1930

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Genealogical research involves piecing together information to create a coherent picture of family history. While traditional sources such as birth, marriage and death records are fundamental, maps also have a role to play. They provide geographical context, help researchers trace family movements, and reveal connections between historical events and individual family stories. By understanding the role of maps in family history research, genealogists can unlock insights into the lives of ancestors and enrich their family story.

In the past, historic maps had to be accessed by visiting libraries and archives in person, making them a less attractive resource than name-rich records. Now, however, vast numbers of old maps are easily available online, making them an essential tool for family historians.

As well as providing geographical context, maps also enable researchers to track changes over time. For example, you may notice new roads or railway lines appearing that will have opened up fresh opportunities for your forebears. Or a map may reveal that an area you thought of as urban was still quite rural at the time that your family lived there.

Additionally, maps can reveal connections between families. When multiple families with the same surname appear in close geographic proximity, there is a

## Tithe Maps

Introduced in the 1830s, tithe maps and the associated records reveal the names of landowners and occupiers

This example of a tithe map shows the parish of Llanfihangel-y-traethau in Ardudwy, Gwynedd, North-West Wales

Tithing was the ancient custom of giving 10 per cent of a farmer's yearly produce to support the local church and clergy. It became law in the 9th century and, in principle, required payments to be made in kind. In practice this was cumbersome both for the farmer and the church, so straightforward monetary payments were often substituted instead.

The years following the Napoleonic Wars saw widespread agricultural depression, and tithes became increasingly unpopular. In 1836 the Tithe Commutation Act aimed to replace all remaining tithes in England and Wales with a financial payment. Local agents were tasked with surveying and valuing land to calculate landowners' liability, which resulted in hundreds of maps and accompanying records. Most maps were completed by 1850, with copies held locally. One was also sent to the Tithe Commission in London. The creation of the maps was paid for by the landowners, and the quality and accuracy varies dramatically.

Accompanying the maps, the tithe apportionments name the landowner and the charge apportioned to each plot, but also include the occupiers of properties.

Although this is often seen as a rural tax, many maps include more urban areas.

higher likelihood of some kind of familial connection. Analysing maps of land ownership and village layouts can provide clues about familial relationships that will not be immediately evident from written records.

### Strategies For Using Maps

Using maps effectively requires an organised approach. Decide on which families you wish to focus on and then identify key locations from your genealogical records, such as towns, villages or parishes. To pinpoint exactly where your relation lived, you will need records that include an address. Census returns are the most obvious choice here, but civil records often include addresses as do many parish records. Trade and residential directories are also helpful.

Also some maps recorded land ownership. These may reveal how the land was used, who owned it and the state of the property, giving insights into your family's status and even occupation.

Maps can reveal proximity between ancestral locations too. For example, identifying neighbouring parishes might lead to discovering records of members of your extended family. Studying roads, canals and railway lines can also explain family migrations or how two people met – rural ancestors may have encountered each other in a market town that connected both of their villages.

You can also use maps to help understand jurisdictions and boundary changes. Some ▶

towns and villages have moved between counties as boundaries have changed, for example, making records harder to locate. The free website FamilySearch has a useful map on its website showing the different jurisdiction boundaries for England and Wales in 1851 at **familysearch.org/mapp**. You can search for a parish and get a list of all adjoining parishes, or check to see what area falls under a particular diocese – very useful for tracking down wills, for example.

Including maps in a family history narrative adds depth and clarity. Try annotating maps with information about ancestral homes, migration routes and significant events. These annotated maps can serve as valuable visual aids when you're sharing your family history with others.

**TOP TIP!**

If your relation owned land, always look for wills. People may have inherited land far from where they lived. Before 1858 check local diocese records or **probatesearch.service.gov.uk** for later wills.

A member of staff at the Roath Library in Cardiff uses a map to explain news of the war to children, 19 November 1939

## Which Maps To Use – And Where To Find Them Online

The best-known maps of the UK are those produced by the Ordnance Survey (OS). The OS was established to map the Scottish Highlands following the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion, and mapped the rest of the country in response to the threat of invasion during the Napoleonic Wars – and is still working today. Luckily for researchers, the National Library of Scotland (NLS) has digitised its historic OS maps covering the whole of the UK, and made them freely available at **maps.nls.uk**. If your family lived in Scotland, you are even luckier because the site also offers a huge range of old maps for the country, from detailed topographic maps to jurisdiction maps and even ones made by the German army.

Another free resource with a vast range of historic maps is Old Maps Online (**oldmapsonline.org**). This website displays maps from archives around the world, including those from the NLS, making it a useful alternative. It has a simple timeline function that lets you set the period you are interested in, and then you can just zoom in on the base map to see what is available.

Early OS maps are usually one inch to the mile, but in the 1840s a project began to do more detailed six-inch-to-the-mile maps followed later by 25-inch-to-the-mile maps. These show an amazing level of detail, from individual trees to sheds and outhouses, and tend to date from the 1880s onwards.

Tithe maps, created in the mid-19th century as part of a scheme to modernise a church 'tax', were paid for by the local landowners and are of varying quality. Welsh tithe maps and their apportionments (recording the landowner and occupier of each plot) are freely available

## How To Use The Website Old Maps Online

You can find fascinating historic maps from a range of archives all in one place

1 Visit **oldmapsonline.org** and select 'Explore maps'. You can sign in using your Google account. To the right of the base map is a list of historic maps, along the bottom is a timeline and at the top is a search box. Type in the name of a place.

2 Select a map from the right-hand panel. There are four options across the top. 'Discover' places the map onto a base map and 'Document' just presents the map on its own. Paid subscribers can change the base map for the 'Compare' option.

3 Adjust the timeline along the bottom of the screen to find maps that relate to the time your family lived in the area. Generally the website is good at putting the most useful maps at the top of the panel, but always scroll down to see all maps available.

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# 4 ONLINE MAPS AND HOW TO USE THEM

**Sarah shares her four favourite types of map that can readily be found online, as well as her advice for making the most of the information that they hold**

## VALUATION OFFICE SURVEY

Also known as the Lloyd George Doomsday Survey, this survey of property and land from c1910–1915 can be used with the 1911 census. The surveyors used Ordnance Survey (OS) maps to mark land boundaries, and created Valuation Books now held in local archives. The surveyors also created Field Books, held by The National Archives (TNA), with more details about properties.

### Where To Find Them Online

The largest online collection is on TheGenealogist (**thegenealogist.co.uk**), which is digitising the maps and Field Books held by TNA. Counties covered so far include London and south-east England. Some local archives are now digitising their own maps and Valuation Books, while the London books are on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**).

## FIRE-INSURANCE PLANS

Often referred to as Goad maps, after their creator Charles Goad, these plans cover the industrial areas of many towns and cities in the UK and date from the late 1880s to the 1960s. Details include what buildings were used for and sometimes the names of the business owners, so you can use these maps in conjunction with occupation details to see where a relation have worked.

### Where To Find Them Online

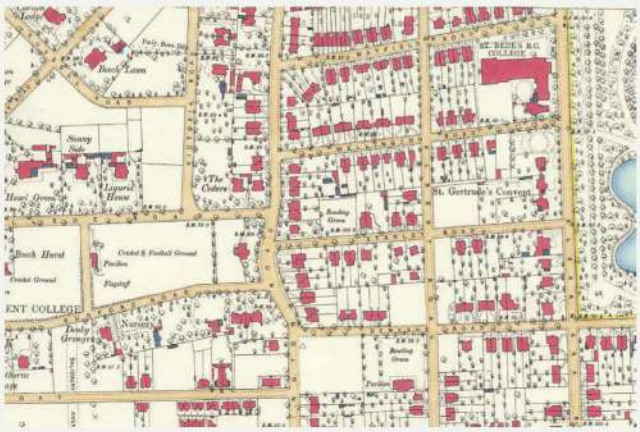
The British Library has the largest collection online, which can be accessed via Old Maps Online (**oldmapsonline.org**); the London plans are also at Layers of London (**layersoflondon.org**). Scottish examples are available on **maps.nls.uk/towns/goad**. Note that most of the online examples predate the First World War.

## TITHE MAPS

Mostly from the 1840s (England and Wales only), these maps can be used in conjunction with the 1841 and 1851 censuses. They may also show land owned by an ancestor away from where they lived. Consult wills to connect the maps to land inheritance.

### Where To Find Them Online

The National Archives' collection, for England and Wales, is at TheGenealogist (**thegenealogist.co.uk**). Some archives have digitised their maps including Bradford, Cheshire and Leeds.



## ORDNANCE SURVEY (OS) MAPS

Covering the whole of the UK, OS maps should play a key role in documenting your family history. You can also use them to plot the routes of census enumerators if an address is unclear.

### Where To Find Them Online

The National Library of Scotland has now digitised most of its collection of OS maps covering the whole of the UK, and recently added maps from the 1940s to the 1970s enabling researchers to track changes in postwar Britain; visit **maps.nls.uk/os** for details. OS maps are also at Old Maps Online (**oldmapsonline.org**).

from the National Library of Wales' site **places.library.wales**. For England, the collection of maps and apportionments held by The National Archives (TNA) have been digitised and are available via TheGenealogist (**thegenealogist.co.uk**). Locally held records have also sometimes been digitised and transcribed, so it is worth searching online to see what is available. Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, for example, has an excellent online map collection including tithe maps at **maps.cheshireeast.gov.uk/tithemaps**. There was no equivalent survey in Scotland, where a less burdensome system of 'teinds' was in place.

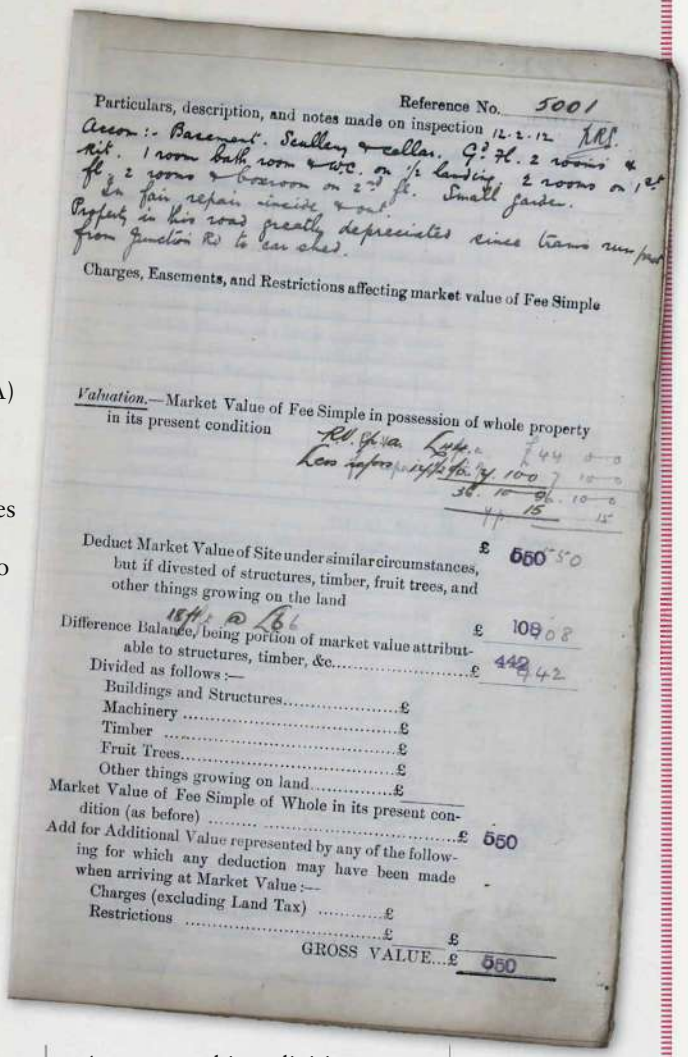
## Domesday Delight

Apportionments and tithe maps tie in well with the 1841 and 1851 censuses. Similarly, the Valuation Office Survey, sometimes known as the Lloyd George Domesday Survey, can be used in conjunction with the 1911 census. The survey was commissioned in 1910 to enable a new tax on the increase in property values brought in by the then chancellor of the exchequer, David Lloyd George. Surveyors used existing OS maps to create their maps, and copies were kept locally along with the Valuation Books listing owners, occupiers and the rateable value of the property. Some archives, such as Oxfordshire, have put their collections online (**heritagesearch.oxfordshire.gov.uk/pages/maps**).

TNA also has copies of the maps, plus the surveyors' Field Books. These are currently being digitised and indexed on TheGenealogist, and those for the counties of Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, London, Middlesex, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Surrey and Wiltshire are already available.

Some surveyors recorded very little detail in the Field Books, while others drew maps to show outhouses – and even described interiors and surroundings.

Scotland also carried out the Valuation Office Survey, but the surviving records are not online.



Reference No. 5001

Particulars, description, and notes made on inspection 12.2.12

Accom :- Basement. Scullery & cellar. G.F. 2 rooms & kit. 1 room bath room & w.c. on ½ landing. 2 rooms on 1st fl. 2 rooms & bacon on 2nd fl. Small garden. In fair repair inside & out. Property in his road greatly depreciates since trams run past from Junction Rd to Ewe Ches.

Charges, Easements, and Restrictions affecting market value of Fee Simple

Valuation.—Market Value of Fee Simple in possession of whole property in its present condition

Less before 14½ p.a. @ 10 = 36. 10 0 / 15

£ 550 0 0

Deduct Market Value of Site under similar circumstances, but if divested of structures, timber, fruit trees, and other things growing on the land

18½ @ 6d

£ 108 08

Difference Balance, being portion of market value attributable to structures, timber, &c. £ 442 42

Divided as follows :—

Buildings and Structures £

Machinery £

Timber £

Fruit Trees £

Other things growing on land £

Market Value of Fee Simple of Whole in its present condition (as before) £ 550

Add for Additional Value represented by any of the following for which any deduction may have been made when arriving at Market Value :—

Charges (excluding Land Tax) £

Restrictions £ £

GROSS VALUE £ 550

A page from a Field Book from the Valuation Office Survey. Not all surveyors provided so much detail

As more archives digitise their old maps, so opportunities increase to tie maps in more closely to your research. Know Your Place – West of England (**kypwest.org.uk**), for example, is essential for West Country kin. What you may find online could range from fire-insurance maps (often called Goad maps) that could help you locate the size and whereabouts of a business listed as a place of work in the 1921 census, to 18th-century estate maps created by landowners that you can tie in with entries in parish registers. There's a large collection of Scottish estate maps, for example, on **maps.nls.uk**.

If your research takes you to London in the late Victorian era, the site Charles Booth's London at **booth.lse.ac.uk** offers maps and notebooks detailing the relative poverty of individual streets, created by the eponymous social researcher and reformer. These provide invaluable insight into the status and life of your relations.

By using the vast range of maps available online you can bring a new perspective to your research. Ultimately, they allow you to not only uncover facts but also tell richer, more compelling stories about your forebears' lives.

**SARAH WILLIAMS** is the editor of *WDYTYA? Magazine*

# Resources

**Take your research further**

**BOOK**

*Maps for Family and Local History, 2nd Edition*
**Geraldine Beech and Rose Mitchell**
*The National Archives, 2004*
This guide explains tithe records, in addition to the Valuation Office and National Farm Surveys.

**WEBSITES**

A VISION OF BRITAIN THROUGH TIME
w **visionofbritain.org.uk**
Search this site for historic maps including useful boundary maps.

KNOW YOUR PLACE – WEST OF ENGLAND
w **kypwest.org.uk**
This digital project features maps from a range of archives.

LAYERS OF LONDON
w **layersoflondon.org**
The material here ranges from medieval maps and Charles Booth's poverty maps to bomb-damage sites from the Second World War.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND
w **maps.nls.uk**
Visit for Ordnance Survey maps covering the whole of the UK, as well as hundreds of specialist and historic maps for Scotland.

OLD MAPS ONLINE
w **oldmapsonline.org**
This site has maps from a range of archives, and a handy timeline filter.

THEGENEALOGIST
w **thegenealogist.co.uk**
This subscription site is easy to search by place, and is the only one where you can view the tithe records held by The National Archives. It's also digitising the Valuation Office Survey.

TITHE MAPS OF WALES
w **places.library.wales**
Search apportionment records and their accompanying maps held by the National Library of Wales.

Members of the Women's Land Army work on a farm during the Second World War

# FEMALE ANCESTORS IN 5 RECORDS

**Janet Few** shares her expert advice for researching the lives of the women in your family tree

Half of our direct ancestors are female, but they can become overlooked. In a patriarchal society, females were regarded as second-class citizens and they did not experience the full rights, opportunities and benefits that were open to males. Largely as a consequence of this, women do not spring so readily from the records. Until the 1882 Married Women's Property Act, a wife owned only the clothes she stood up in, unless there had been a marriage settlement that arranged otherwise. This is why, with very few exceptions, married women were not able to make wills, or to own or rent property. Men are also more likely to be involved in public affairs. This means that probate material, electoral rolls, leases and tax lists are dominated by our male forebears.

Of course, women appear in the mainstream genealogical records of civil registration, census returns and parish registers. Even then, however, there is not equal representation; for example, earlier baptism registers might mention the name of the father but not the mother.

In addition, it can be easier to focus on the male line in family history because surnames are normally inherited in that way.

**JANET FEW** runs an online course about researching your female ancestors for Pharos Tutors (**pharostutors.com**)

Even if we strive to give our female relations equal prominence, they can remain elusive. Yet women are there in the background; it just may take a little more ingenuity to uncover the stories of their lives.

There are some records where women may appear in similar or greater numbers than men. For example, women were unfortunately more likely to find themselves in poverty, so workhouse records and the accounts of the overseers of the ▶

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poor can be a good place to look. In addition, although it is true that more men than women were convicted of serious crimes, there were still female offenders and women predominated in certain types of cases.

### Workplace Inequality

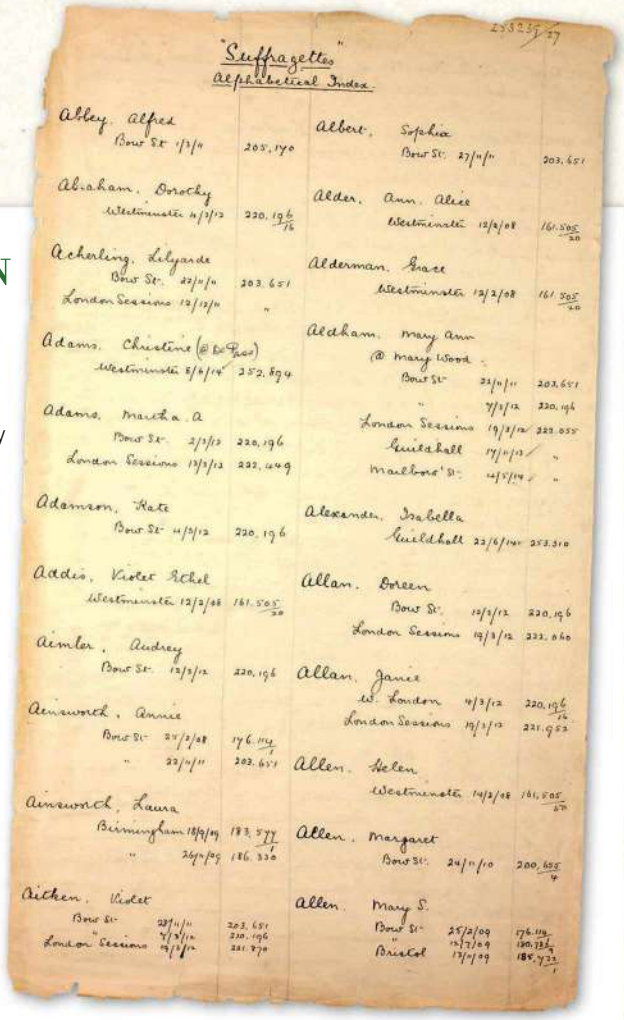
The world of work was not an equal one. Until recently, it is principally men who we find being bound as apprentices, joining trade guilds, and enlisting in the armed services, thus giving rise to occupational records that mention women much less frequently. Education too was an area where society's expectations differed. It was a widely held belief that women were physiologically incapable of academic learning, and that excessive study would be injurious to their health. Study and paid work was also seen to detract from their perceived essential role as mothers and homemakers. This means that we find far fewer women in records of higher education and the professions. Yet, some women did embrace these roles, often in stereotypically female occupations such as nursing or teaching, which may generate documentation. Others were involved in the fight for suffrage, with its own records.

If we can't find a relative named in the records, we can still try to understand more about her life, the domestic chores she was expected to undertake and her role as a mother. Although the basic process is unchanged, the rituals, care and interventions surrounding childbirth have altered over time. Think about contraception (or the lack of it), where births were likely to take place and who may have attended. Investigate the medical knowledge and techniques that were available at the time.

Many books and websites can help us to uncover the social and historical context of how our female relations were treated. I'm one of the family historians involved in the online project 'A Few Forgotten Women', and you can find useful sources and resources listed on our website: **fewforgottenwomen.com/general-4.**

## The Campaign For Suffrage

If your forebear was part of the fight for women's suffrage, there are several sources where she may appear. Newspapers published details of arrests, so check the British Newspaper Archive (**britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**). A transcript of the names of some 1,500 signatories to a petition for votes for women in 1866 is on the UK Parliament's site at **tinyurl.com/parl-petition** and can also be searched on Findmypast (**bit.ly/fmp-pet-1866**), which also has a browsable suffragette collection (**bit.ly/fmp-suffragette**). Finally a list of suffragettes who were arrested between 1906 and 1914 *(pictured)* is at The National Archives (HO 45/24665) and on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/61005**).


"Suffragettes"
Alphabetical Index

Abley, Alfred — Bow St. 1/3/11 — 205,190
Abraham, Dorothy — Westminster 11/3/12 — 220,196/16
Acherling, Lilyarde — Bow St. 22/11/11 — 203,651; London Sessions 12/12/11
Adams, Christine (@ Eva Pao) — Westminster 8/8/14 — 252,894
Adams, Martha A — Bow St. 2/3/12 — 220,196; London Sessions 19/3/12 — 222,449
Adamson, Kate — Bow St. 4/3/12 — 220,196
Addis, Violet Ethel — Westminster 12/2/08 — 161,505/20
Aimler, Audrey — Bow St. 12/3/12 — 220,196
Ainsworth, Annie — Bow St. 24/2/08 — 176,114/1; " 22/11/11 — 203,651
Ainsworth, Laura — Birmingham 18/9/09 — 183,577/1; " 26/11/09 — 186,330
Aitken, Violet — Bow St. 22/11/11 — 203,651; " 7/3/12 — 220,196; London Sessions 19/3/12 — 221,270
Albert, Sophia — Bow St. 27/11/11 — 203,651
Alder, Ann Alice — Westminster 12/2/08 — 161,505/20
Alderman, Grace — Westminster 12/2/08 — 161,505/20
Aldham, Mary Ann (@ Mary Wood) — Bow St. 22/11/11 — 203,651; " 7/3/12 — 220,196; London Sessions 19/3/12 — 222,055; Guildhall 17/10/13 — "; Marlboro' St. 14/5/14 — "
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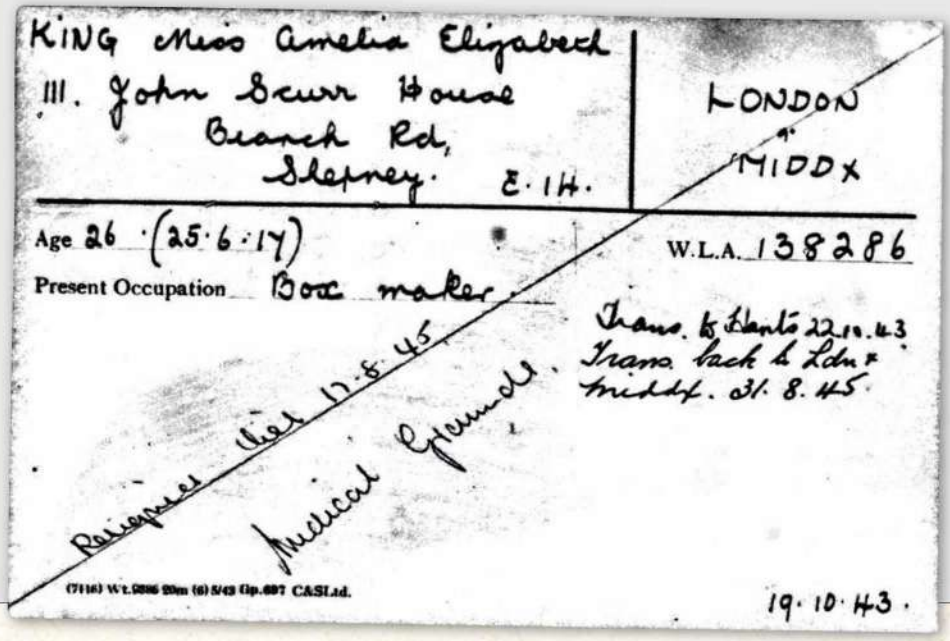
Allen, Helen — Westminster 14/2/08 — 161,505/20
Allen, Margaret — Bow St. 24/11/10 — 200,605/4
Allen, Mary S. — Bow St. 25/2/09 — 176,129; " 13/7/09 — 180,132/1; Bristol 13/2/09 — 185,733/1

## Women At War

Although it is only recently that women have been allowed to join the armed forces, women nonetheless played their part in war. There is a list of more than 90,000 First World War Red Cross Voluntary Aid Detachment personnel, most of whom are female, on the British Red Cross' website at **vad.redcross.org.uk/volunteering-during-the-first-world-war**.

The Women's Land Army (WLA) functioned in both world wars. The National Archives (TNA) has index cards *(pictured)* relating to those who served in 1939–1950. These are on Findmypast (**bit.ly/fmp-wla**) and Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/62020**). Details of the WLA and Timber Corps in Scotland are on Scotland's People (**www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/help-and-support/guides/scottish-womens-land-army-records**), while TNA's guides to women's military service are at **tinyurl.com/tna-guides-wom-serv**.


KING Miss Amelia Elizabeth
111. John Scurr House
Branch Rd,
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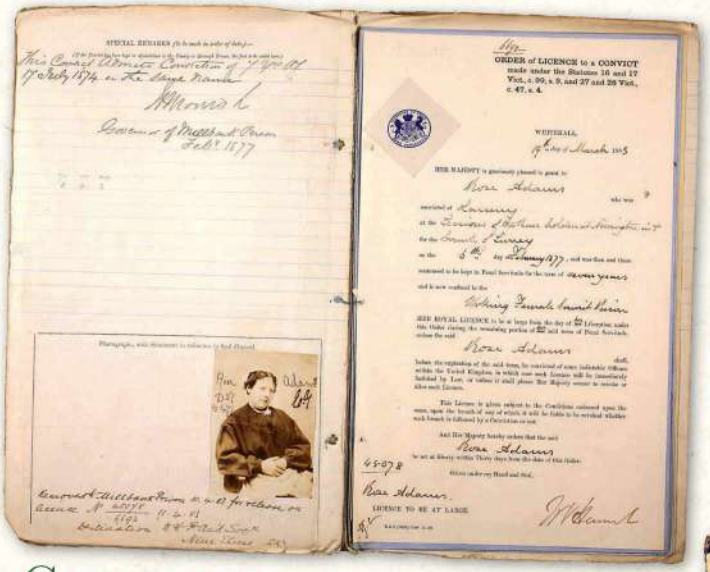
LONDON
MIDDX
Age 26 (25.6.17)
W.L.A. 138286
Present Occupation Box maker
Trans. to Hanlo 22.10.43
Trans. back to Ldn & Middx. 31.8.45
Resigned Chel 17.8.45
Medical Grounds.
(7116) W.L.2086 20m (6) 5/43 Gp.697 CASLtd.
19.10.43.

A kitchen scene from *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management*

# Domestic Chores And Service

Guides to housewifery date back to the 16th century. The most famous is *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* (first published in 1861, and at Project Gutenberg: **gutenberg.org/ebooks/10136**). This gives details of the expectations and duties of various types of servant and of housewives. There are also resources that help us understand how housewives fed their family. Links to pages about the history of food are at Gode Cookery (**godecookery.com**). Newspapers and magazines have information about gadgets that our relations may have desired. Finally the Internet Archive (**archive.org**) has free manuals such as Hannah Glasse's *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* (1747, **tinyurl.com/arch-glasse**), Gervase Markham's *The English Housewife* (1660, **tinyurl.com/arch-markham**) and Hannah Wolley's *The Compleat Servant-Maid* (1677, **tinyurl.com/arch-wolley**).



ORDER of LICENCE to a CONVICT made under the Statutes 16 and 17 Vict., c. 99, s. 9, and 27 and 28 Vict., c. 47, s. 4.

WHEREAS,

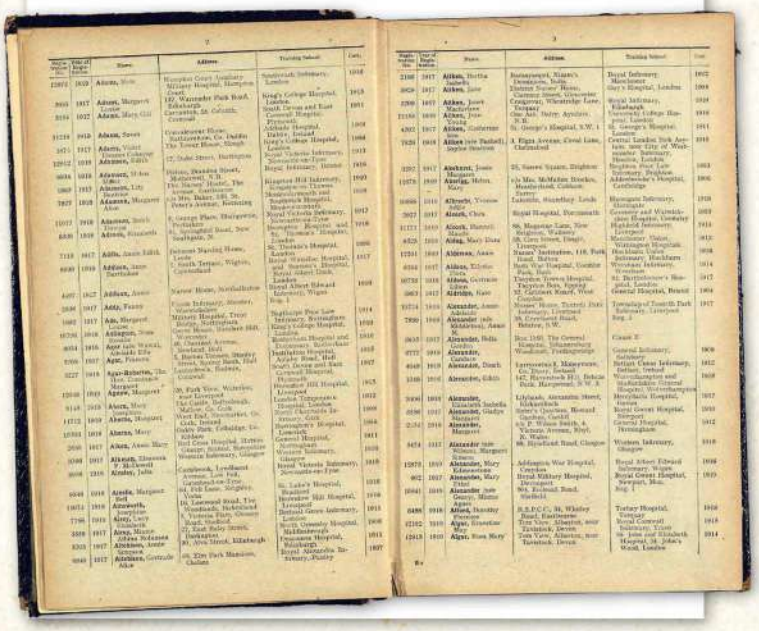
HER MAJESTY is graciously pleased to grant to

Rose Adams

LICENCE TO BE AT LARGE

# Nursing

Nursing began to become a respectable profession after the mid-19th century. By the 1880s, training was available, usually in the hospitals themselves. The National Archives' Hospital Records dataset has not been updated since 2012, but may help you locate material; you can download the Excel spreadsheet from **ckan.publishing.service.gov.uk/dataset/hospital-records**. The British Nursing Association and the Nightingale Fund also provided training. Nursing registers for 1898–1968 *(pictured)* are on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/60423/**), as well as the Queen's Nursing Institute Roll of Nurses 1891–1931 (**ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/61098**). The excellent guide *Tracing Nurses* can be downloaded from the Royal College of Nursing's website at **rcn.org.uk/library/archives/family-history**.



# Criminals

If women broke the law, or offended the moral sensibilities of the time, they were often dealt with differently from men. Since women had the responsibility for bring up the next generation, their transgressions were seen to have a more serious impact on society. The records of the ecclesiastical courts, available in diocesan archives, contain many cases of women accused of adultery, fornication and concealing births. Although these actions require male participation at some point, men rarely appear. Women also often feature in cases of drunkenness, soliciting and 'immoral' behaviour. Newspaper articles are often the best source, so try the British Newspaper Archive (**britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**). Women also predominate in cases of witchcraft. A list of English witch trials can be found at **witchtrials.co.uk**.

The National Archives holds licences of parole for female convicts for 1853–1871 and 1883–1887 *(pictured)* in PCOM 4. These are available on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/1979/**).

Lucy Williams and Barry Godfrey's *Criminal Women 1850–1920* (Pen & Sword, 2018) is a good guide to researching female offenders.

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WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

# 'I Uncovered Dad's Ordeal In A Croatian Concentration Camp'

Sibel Roller didn't know the details of her antifascist father's brutal incarceration during the Second World War until she cleared out her parents' home years after his death, as **Claire Vaughan** explains

The straightforward prose is powerful and shocking. "My heart pounded like a drum inside my ears. 'Four, five, six…' the counting continued. A shadow dashed past me and ran toward the barbed-wire fence. Another ear-splitting pop of the gun. They shot number seven in the back. 'Shuffle up, the rest of you!' Stomach heaving, I counted with them. Was I ninth or tenth? 'Where were we? Seven, eight, nine, ten! Kneel!' Another crack. The man next to me slumped to the ground. Did the comrade on the barbed wire save my life? I didn't even know his name."

This excerpt comes from the secret memoirs of Sibel Roller's father Dragan. It gives a terrifying insight into the reality he faced in the Jasenovac concentration camp in Croatia during the Second World War. Jasenovac was notorious, but many people today have never heard of it.

**An estimated 80,000–120,000 people perished in Dragan's camp**

When Sibel, a former microbiology researcher, was a schoolgirl, her father told her that he'd spent three years as a political prisoner in Jasenovac, but he never went into any detail.

"Whenever I asked him questions about it, his face went blank, and he lapsed into stony silence. After a while, I stopped asking. Years later, in the late 1990s, he testified at the war-crimes trial of the camp commandant Dinko Šakić." Following the trial, he gave Sibel newspaper cuttings about his testimony, but remained tight-lipped about what he'd endured. "The camp had a reputation for brutality, but I had no knowledge of its history when I discovered dad's manuscript," she adds.

Dragan's ID booklet during his forced labour in Linz

UNP/TIM KAVANAGH

## Under The Ustasha

"Many people will be familiar with at least some elements of the Holocaust and the horrors of camps like Auschwitz, Majdanek or Treblinka. These camps were in occupied Poland, and run by Nazi commandants. Jasenovac was different in that it was the only European camp not run by Nazis, but by the Croatian ultranationalists known as Ustasha. An estimated 80,000–120,000 people perished in this ▶

Sibel has tracked down photos taken when her father was arrested in Zagreb

camp: Serbs, Jews, Roma and political prisoners. Some called it the Auschwitz of the Balkans."

Dragan died in 2003. Several years later, Sibel was clearing her parents' home in Zagreb when she discovered a manuscript and poems he'd written about his survival in Jasenovac in a cardboard box. Her father's account was in Croatian. "The translation turned out not to be as easy as I had hoped. I am fluent in Croatian, but my vocabulary is limited as we left Yugoslavia when I was 10 years old."

Dragan's writing has now been published in Sibel's book *The Rooster – Discovering My Father's Memories From the Jasenovac Concentration Camp*, which came out in spring 2024.

Dragan was born in Virovitica, Yugoslavia, in 1922 and was a political activist from his late teens – distributing antifascist leaflets and attending Youth League meetings. In autumn 1940, Dragan went to Zagreb to study medicine. He met a girl called Biserka at an antifascist meeting there. Their love affair took place against the backdrop of protests and marches.

In April 1941, he was at home in Virovitica between university terms. An entry in his account, dated 6 April, reads, "My father crashed into my bedroom yelling, 'The Luftwaffe is bombing Belgrade!' Startled out of a deep sleep, I stumbled out of bed and joined him in front of the radio… Virovitica was preparing for battle. One red-faced farmer, his uniform reeking of mothballs and straining at the buttons around his middle, pulled a bullock cart loaded with a small cannon along our street toward the main square… The newly formed cavalry, made up of reservists, rode past. The air smelled of leather and manure. Women wept and embraced their sons and husbands on their doorsteps."

**TELL YOUR STORY**

**Share your family story with us and you could appear in the magazine!**

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*

## The Tanks Arrive

As the town descended into chaos, Dragan and his family huddled together on a mattress in the cellar and listened to the German tanks roll into Virovitica.

"When the German Army invaded on 10 April 1941, the Ustasha seized power, splintered Croatia and Bosnia from the rest of the country and turned them into a single fascist state, which remained the status quo until the end of the war," Sibel tells *WDYTYA? Magazine*.

Back at the university after the April break, things had changed. "Fascist students took it upon themselves to clear the faculty of 'undesirables'." Jews, Serbs and Communists. Dragan and his comrades at the Youth League, those who hadn't been arrested or shot, met in secret and cells carried out acts of resistance: "an explosion at the post office, then a fire at the sports stadium". By November 1941, the Ustasha had finally caught up with him and Dragan was arrested, "for donating ten kuna to the Red cause", and sent to Jasenovac. He was just 19.

"A few weeks in this wretched place," he wrote, "and I've been reduced to a skeleton wrapped loosely in a leathery sack of sallow skin. A mere simulacrum of a man." Dragan endured regular beatings and witnessed campmates killed, or burned alive in the camp's kilns. He contracted typhus and almost died – looked after by his "guardian angel" Milan Špalj, who was later shot. "Your poems amplified the horror of the camp," Sibel writes in her commentary. His survivor's guilt can be felt in every line of verse.

The Yugoslav partisans liberated Jasenovac in May 1945, but Dragan had already left, traded as forced labour and sent to Linz, Austria. "The journey probably saved your life. The majority of those who stayed behind perished during the final liquidation of the camp," she says in the book. Linz was liberated by the US Army on 5

Members of the Ustasha execute prisoners near the Jasenovac camp

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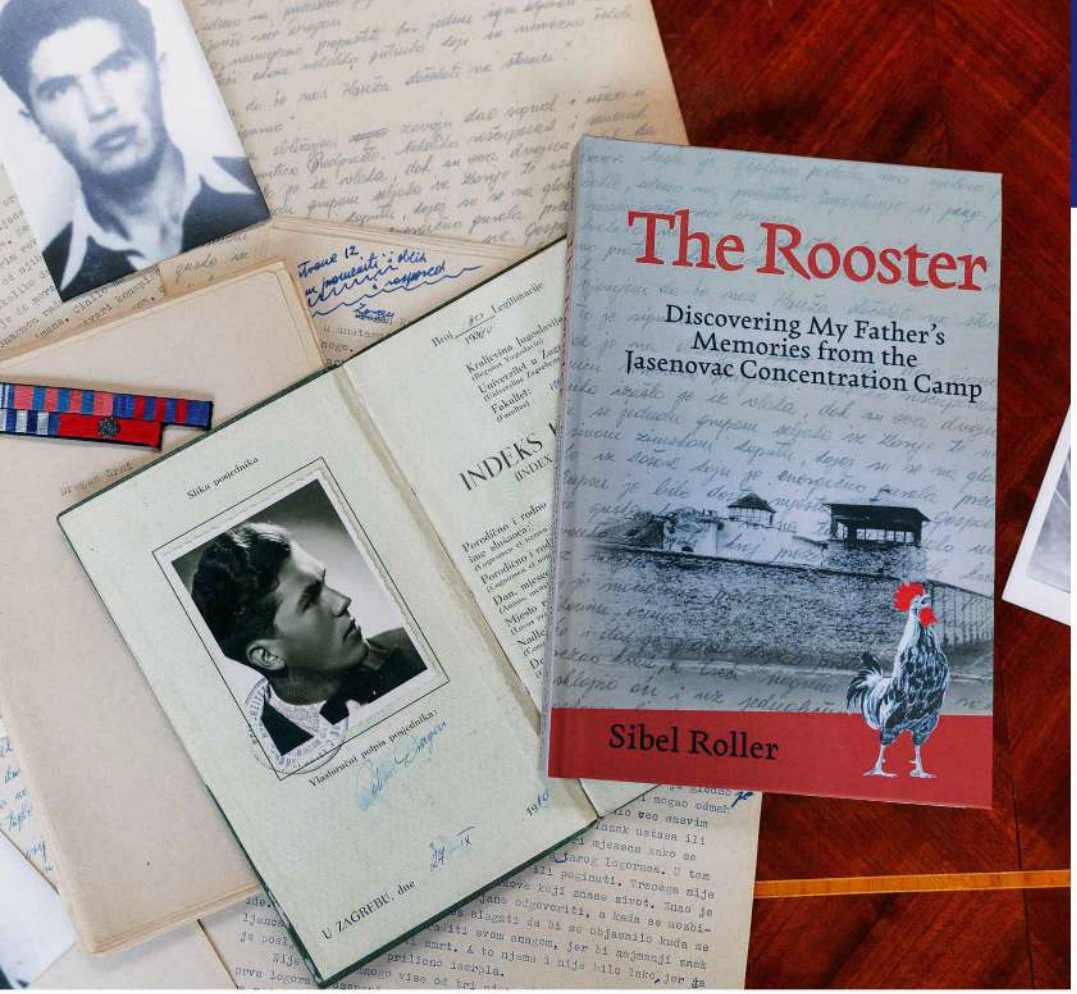



May 1945. Dragan re-enrolled at the university, and was an active member of the Communist Party. "You were busy building a new socialist system," Sibel writes. "The possibilities for change must have seemed limitless."

Her father's memoirs were an incredibly hard read for Sibel: "I felt angry and sad. Angry at the camp guards and their superiors for their cruelty, and sad that human beings could be reduced to such levels of depravity.

"I remembered my father as a *bon vivant*, a happy and confident man who loved parties and dancing. It must have taken an inordinate amount of determination and courage to survive the camp, but also to not let the experience ruin his life and that of his family."

**I felt angry at the camp guards and their superiors for their cruelty**

## An Amazing Discovery

On one visit to Zagreb to sort through her parents' things, Sibel came across a letter to her father from the Shoah Foundation, which began recording interviews with Holocaust survivors and witnesses in 1994. It read, "Dear Mr Roller, Your interview has been carefully preserved as part of the biggest library of survivor testimonies ever collected. Well into the future, people will be able to see the faces and hear the voices of survivors, learn about their life stories, and remember them forever. We thank you for your participation, your strength, and your generosity of spirit." It was signed "Steven Spielberg". The film director had founded the organisation after making *Schindler's List* (1993).

There was a video cassette with the letter, dated 1998. Watching the interview, Sibel saw her father talk about the atrocities at the camp for the first time, and the pain and grief on his face.

*The Rooster* is Sibel's own lasting memorial to Dragan. "I didn't want his experiences to be forgotten. The book is a tribute to his courage and resilience, and to the memory of all those who lost their lives through genocide."

As well as Dragan's memoirs and poetry Sibel's book includes precious photographs

UNP/TIM KAVANAGH

## Resources

**Sibel found these resources very useful for her research**

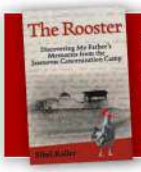
**BOOK**

*Balkan Genocides*
**Paul Mojzes**
*Rowman & Littlefield, 2011*
Sibel did a lot of background reading to give context to her father's experiences, and cites this title as "possibly one of the most objective books in English on the horrors of 20th-century ethnic cleansing in the countries of the former Yugoslavia". A paperback edition was released four years later.

**WEBSITES**

JASENOVAC MEMORIAL SITE
w **jusp-jasenovac.hr/Default.aspx?sid=5020**
Nothing remained of the Jasenovac camp after the war. Where it once stood, there is a memorial site with a museum and sculptures set in a landscaped park. The memorial's website has extensive information about the history of the camp, as well as a list of the victims who died there.

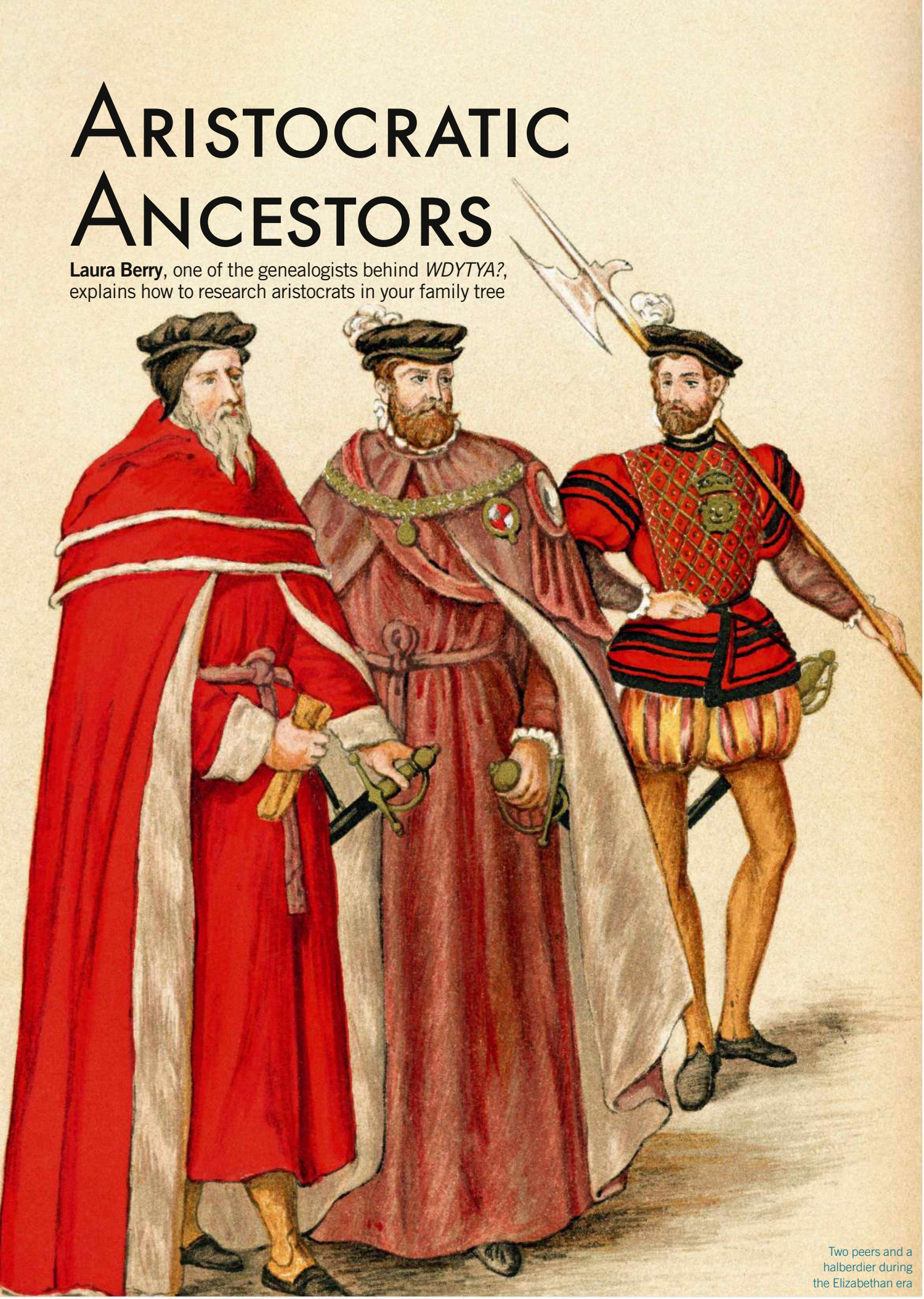
SHOAH FOUNDATION
w **https://sfi.usc.edu/**
This online archive contains approximately 59,000 interviews with survivors of the Holocaust and other genocides. Sibel didn't know that her dad had been interviewed until several years after his death, when she discovered a video of the recording in a box of family documents. You can register with the site for free to search the archive, request a copy of a relative's testimony, and view the interviews – although note that some (including Dragan Roller's) are only available via a subscribing institution.




Sibel's book *The Rooster* is available now from Rowman & Littlefield (RRP £30)

# Aristocratic Ancestors

**Laura Berry**, one of the genealogists behind *WDYTYA?*, explains how to research aristocrats in your family tree



Two peers and a halberdier during the Elizabethan era

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Discovering an aristocratic forebear is the holy grail of genealogical research. Who wouldn't want to embed their ancestry in the legendary tales of royal courts and great houses? If you uncover a lord in your tree then there's also a chance of connecting with a monarch further back, since minor royals married into the landed and political classes, thereby maintaining a circle of power and wealth.

Aristocratic bloodlines were well documented to pre-empt inheritance disputes and demonstrate links to illustrious forebears, and many published pedigrees can be found easily. The difficulty lies in separating fact from fiction. Even manuscript pedigrees are secondary sources, and every relationship should ideally be verified with contemporary historical records such as church and court documents.

Genealogy websites are awash with trees that have been uploaded by wishful thinkers claiming links to nobility – watch out for unlikely geographical relocations, or children born within an unrealistic timeframe. The venerable free website The Peerage (**thepeerage.com**) is a useful starting place if you think you have an aristocratic ancestor, although its creator Darryl Lundy warns us that "it is possible a few errors have crept in", as is Cracroft's Peerage (**cracroftspeerage.co.uk**). The editors of *Burke's Peerage*, published regularly since 1826, *Burke's Landed Gentry*, first published in 1833, and *Debrett's*, established in 1769, make every effort to ensure that their lineages are accurate, but they are not foolproof. You can search the database at **burkespeerage.com** for free, although you must pay for a subscription to view results in full (various plans are available), while a paid subscription is required to search **debretts.com** (prices start at £9.99 a month).

Landowner and country gentleman John Whetham of Kirklington, c1780

Unfortunately, some unscrupulous genealogists have profited from fabricating pedigrees that flattered or elevated their clients' social status. Gustave Anjou (1863–1942) was posthumously exposed as a fraud, having falsely connected Americans willing to pay up to $9,000 with, in the words of a headline in *The New York Times*, "mail-order ancestors" from the 13th century. He was not the first to bend the rules, therefore it's vital to establish an impartial evidence trail.

## First Principles

If family rumours claim that you descend from an aristocrat, it's still necessary to follow traditional methodology and build a tree from scratch. Order full copies of civil certificates of birth, marriage and death for each generation; comb through the 1939 Register and census returns from 1921 back to 1841; and ▶

## Josh Widdicombe

**Josh's connection to Barings Bank delivered more riches than expected**

Some of the discoveries left Josh speechless

In his 2021 episode of *WDYTYA?* comedian and presenter Josh Widdicombe followed the trail of his great grandmother Mary Irene Baring-Gould, who his parents said was related to the founders of Barings Bank. Sure enough, Josh's ancestry could be traced through Mary's father Rev Arthur Baring-Gould to 5x great grandfather Charles Baring. He was the younger brother of John Baring and Sir Francis Baring who founded the bank in 1762. However, his wealthier siblings cut him off after unsuccessful business ventures.

The Baring-Gould family owned Lewtrenchard Manor in Devon and their ancestry was published in pedigrees (see the annotated document) that we verified with primary sources such as baptism, marriage and burial records. Josh's 10x great grandparents were identified as Henry Rich, the 1st Earl of Holland, and his wife Isabella Cope. Like many aristocrats, Henry worked as an adviser to the monarch, Charles I, but being a loyal Royalist in the English Civil War, he was beheaded following his capture at the Battle of Surbiton.

Tapping into an aristocratic line linked Josh to many other noble families, including 13x great grandfather Sir Francis Knollys (1514–1596) who served Elizabeth I's household. The burial plaque for his wife Katherine in Westminster Abbey revealed that her mother was Mary Boleyn, sister of Anne Boleyn, making Katherine a cousin of Elizabeth I. Via the web of interconnected peers Josh could go back further and claim descent from Edward I and his wife Marguerite, daughter of King Philippe of France.

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check probate records, newspaper databases, indexes of memorial inscriptions and anything else available for each period. You'll find plenty of useful records on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**), Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**), TheGenealogist (**thegenealogist.co.uk**) and the vast free site FamilySearch (**familysearch.org**), but beware of AI or user-generated 'hints' and check the credibility of each link carefully. Scotland's People (**scotlandspeople.gov.uk**) is an indispensable resource for those with Scottish roots.

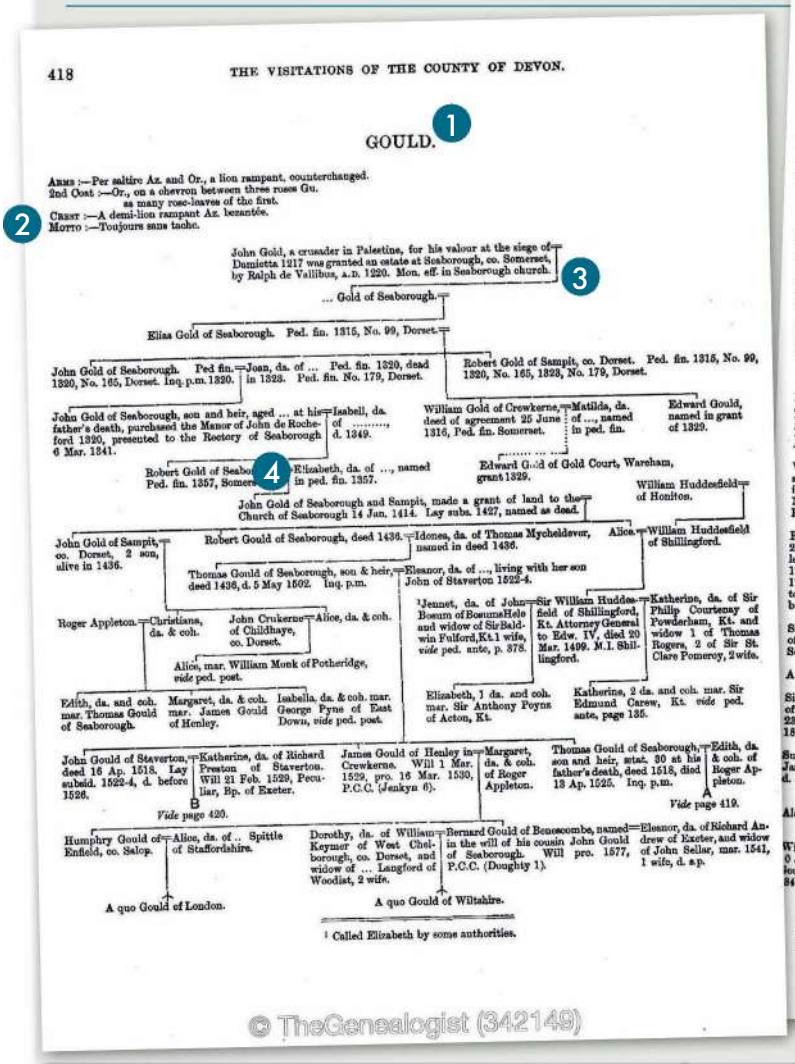
Once you have fleshed out a tree encompassing all siblings back to the early Victorian era then the range of sources for working further back usually dwindles. You should turn to baptisms, marriages and burials in parish registers, search for wills proved in ecclesiastical courts, and check county archives for additional records. If the volume of documents for a particular branch begins to mount then you might be onto a winner, because the immediate descendants of aristocrats generated more records than most people.

What you're hoping to find is a 'gateway ancestor' such as General Sir George Anson (1769–1849), the 3x great grandfather of Matthew Pinsent. In the Olympic rower's episode of *WDYTYA?* broadcast in 2007 Anson connected him to a multitude of fascinating characters via his maternal grandfather George Venables-

**The immediate descendants of aristocrats generated more records than most people**

# Heraldic Visitations

The book *The Visitations of the County of Devon, Comprising the Heralds' Visitations of 1531, 1564, & 1620 With Additions by Lieutenant-Colonel JL Vivian* (HS Eland, 1895) illustrates descendants of Devonshire families through to the 19th century. It is widely available online, including at TheGenealogist (**thegenealogist.co.uk**)



If you find a connection to aristocracy you may also find family portraits

Vernon, the 1st Baron Vernon (1709–1780), who in turn directly descended from Edward I. Gateway ancestors are usually men with distinguished occupations, high-ranking military officers, lawyers, clergymen, landed proprietors, or forebears of financial means who went abroad (many plantation owners claimed regal roots – see Burke's *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Colonial Gentry* at **ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/30265**). These paths were often trod by younger sons and grandsons who did not inherit the title and wealth of the heir.

## Magazines And Books

Gateway ancestors might have had an obituary in *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1731–1922; many issues are freely available on the Internet Archive at **archive.org/details/pub_gentlemans-magazine?tab=collection**), or appear in biographical publications like *Who Was Who* (**ukwhoswho.com**) and the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (**oxforddnb.com**), which sometimes reference their nearest aristocratic forefather. Female descendants and branches further down the line of descent typically married the lesser gentry and middling classes, so look for the word "gentleman", merchants, farmers with capital, or yeomen and their wives.

Stories of illegitimate connections to aristocracy are rife and allegations can be difficult to prove beyond establishing a timeline for the reputed parent's movements around the date of conception and birth, unless the offspring was officially recognised. Wills, for example, sometimes refer to "natural" children who wouldn't otherwise be entitled to inherit. In a 2015 *WDYTYA?* episode the actor Frances de la Tour's descent from her 4x great grandmother the Hon. Sophia Ann Delaval, daughter of Lord Delaval, was proved with estate papers and letters at Northumberland Archives (**northumberlandarchives.com**), confirming that Sophia secretly gave birth to a son out of wedlock. Court of Chancery and divorce records at The National Archives (search the catalogue Discovery at **discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**) and the Parliamentary Archives (**https://archives.parliament.uk**) are also great for granular detail of the private lives of the elite (note that the latter's collections are being moved to TNA).

## Parallel Trees

If your rumoured connection is to a particular noble family then it's worth building a good broad tree for them in parallel with your own to see if the two could plausibly overlap. Unfortunately for the late actor John Hurt, who featured in *WDYTYA?* in 2007, there was no evidence that his tree intersected with the Marquess of Sligo's, despite Hurt's ancestor Walter Lord Browne sharing the Sligo surname and Walter's obituary claiming that he descended from a branch of the marquess' family. Examining the dates on each tree closely, it became apparent that Walter ▶

### 1 Surname

The visitations are arranged alphabetically by surname, and one pedigree is spread over several pages.

### 2 Coat Of Arms

The family's arms, crest and motto are described.

### 3 Earliest Generations

Oral family history was gathered by heralds in the 16th and 17th centuries relating to older generations. The information might be inaccurate or impossible to prove.

### 4 Sources

Any genealogical sources are cited using abbreviations – "Ped. fin." relates to feet of fines (*pedes finium*), which recorded the transfer of property, and "Inq. p.m." to inquisitions post mortem.

### 5 Biographical Information

Here we learn that Edward Gould of Lewtrenchard died of the plague in Exeter in 1667.

### 6 Marriages

The entry for the marriage of Charles Baring to Margaret Gould gives insight into the Barings. Following the line of descent, we see that their son William Baring-Gould assumed his mother's name and arms.

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### Did You Know?

In 1448 Sir William de la Pole became the first person without royal blood to reach the highest rank of the peerage when he was named the 1st Duke of Suffolk.

## Expert Picks

Laura recommends these three sites for accessing key sources

**British Newspaper Archive**
w **britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**
Uncover links between the gentry and their descendants in obituaries, BMD notices, and high-society gossip columns.

**TheGenealogist**
w **thegenealogist.co.uk**
Here you can find Prerogative Court of Canterbury wills, and indexes to parish records. You can also search Heralds' Visitations and other published volumes.

**The National Archives**
w **discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**
Search Discovery by surname for estate papers, deeds, pedigrees, wills, equity-court proceedings etc at TNA and in regional archives.

couldn't have fitted in anywhere, so the story may have been woven to impress.

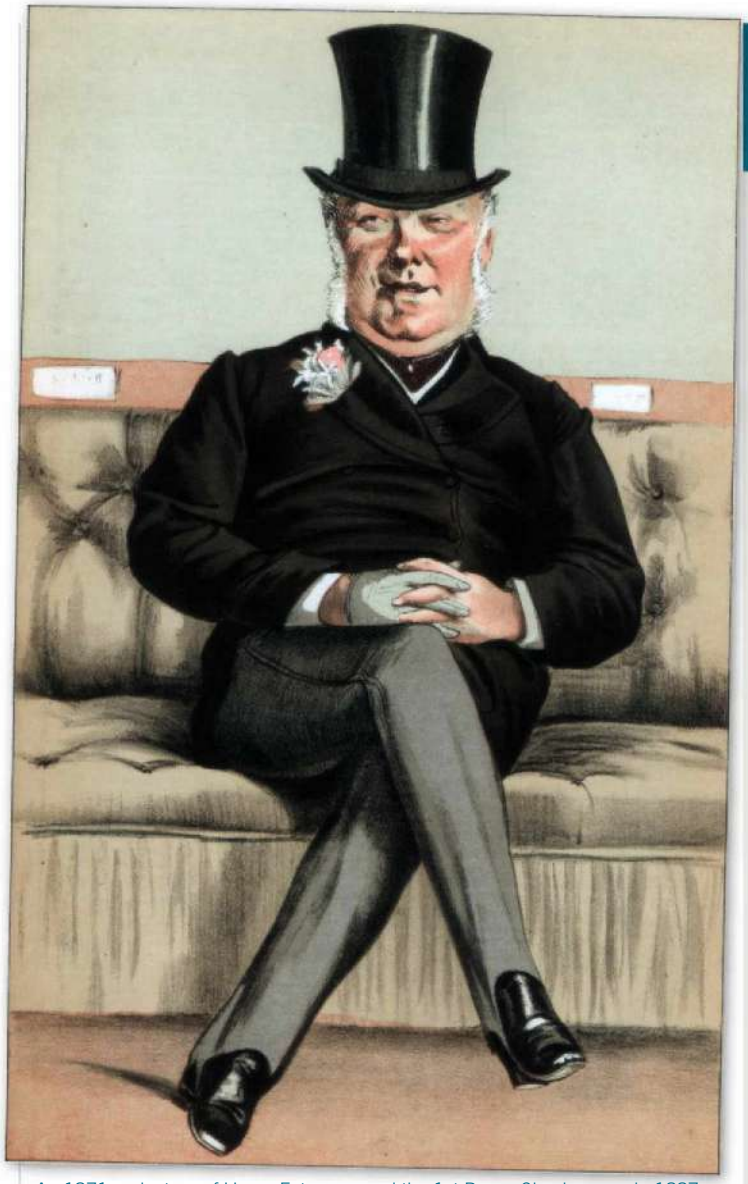
In 2016 *EastEnders* star Danny Dyer's episode of *WDYTYA?* demonstrated that gateway ancestors can materialise when we're least expecting it, and just how important female lines are. His poverty-stricken East London roots were not anticipated to lead to the Gosnolds and then the Tollemache family. The York herald Peter O'Donoghue used the College of Arms' (**college-of-arms.gov.uk**) private collections of manuscripts to trace the Tollemaches back to Henry VIII's adviser Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex, who was himself a 'commoner'. However, Danny's 14x great grandmother Elizabeth Seymour descended from Edward III.

## Valuable Visitations

Heralds, appointed by the Crown, historically officiated at tournaments and regulated the use of coats of arms. They toured the country in the 16th and 17th centuries, visiting gentry families and recording how arms were acquired. The Harleian Society has printed these Heralds' Visitations in county volumes (for title lists see **harleian.org.uk/Volumes.htm**), many of which are freely digitised (see **medievalgenealogy.org.uk/sources/visitations.shtml**). College of Arms heralds can be hired to conduct private research. The Scottish heraldic authority is the Court of the Lord Lyon (**courtofthelordlyon.scot**), with some registers available at Scotland's People.

You can find pedigrees in public repositories by searching by surname at Discovery and on county archives' catalogues, in addition to the Society of Genealogists' site at **sog.org.uk/research-hub/our-collections**. The Internet Archive is again handy for its free digital copies of GE Cokayne's *The Complete Peerage*, published intermittently since 1887, *The Pedigree Register* (1907–1910), old volumes of *Burke's Peerage*, and *The Plantagenet Roll of the Blood Royal: Being a Complete Table of All the Descendants Now Living of Edward III, King of England* (1911).

Diligently verifying each link in an ancient pedigree is not for the faint-hearted, and usually requires expertise in Latin and palaeography. TNA offers online guidance to finding names in older records at **nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/medieval-early-modern-family-history**. With luck, you could come face-to-face with an effigy of your medieval ancestors.



An 1871 caricature of Henry Eaton, named the 1st Baron Cheylesmore in 1887

### TOP TIP!

Research the side branches of your tree since obituaries, marriage certificates and wills of relations who are not in your direct line might allude to aristocratic ancestry.

## Resources

**Take your research further**

**ARCHIVES**

### COLLEGE OF ARMS

a **130 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4V 4BT**
t 020 7248 2762
e *enquiries@college-of-arms.gov.uk*
w **college-of-arms.gov.uk**

Family historians can hire a herald from the College of Arms who has access to a private archive of medieval pedigrees, or book an evening tour of the college's Record Room.

### COURT OF THE LORD LYON

a **New Register House, Edinburgh EH1 3YT**
t 0131 556 7255
e *lyonoffice@gov.scot*
w **courtofthelordlyon.scot**

Visitors are welcome to consult registers of arms here by appointment, but private genealogical research is not undertaken.

### SOCIETY OF GENEALOGISTS

a **40 Wharf Road, London N1 7GS**
t 020 7251 8799
e *hello@sog.org.uk*
w **sog.org.uk/research-hub/visit-us**

The society's library includes pedigrees, peerage publications and copies of parish registers. A day pass for non-members costs £20.

**BOOK**

*Tracing Your Aristocratic Ancestors: A Guide for Family Historians*
**Anthony Adolph**
*Pen & Sword, 2013*
This remains the best book on researching aristocratic relations, despite its age.

**LAURA BERRY** is a lead genealogist for *WDYTYA?*, and in the early 2000s worked on the Sky One series *So You Think You're Royal?*

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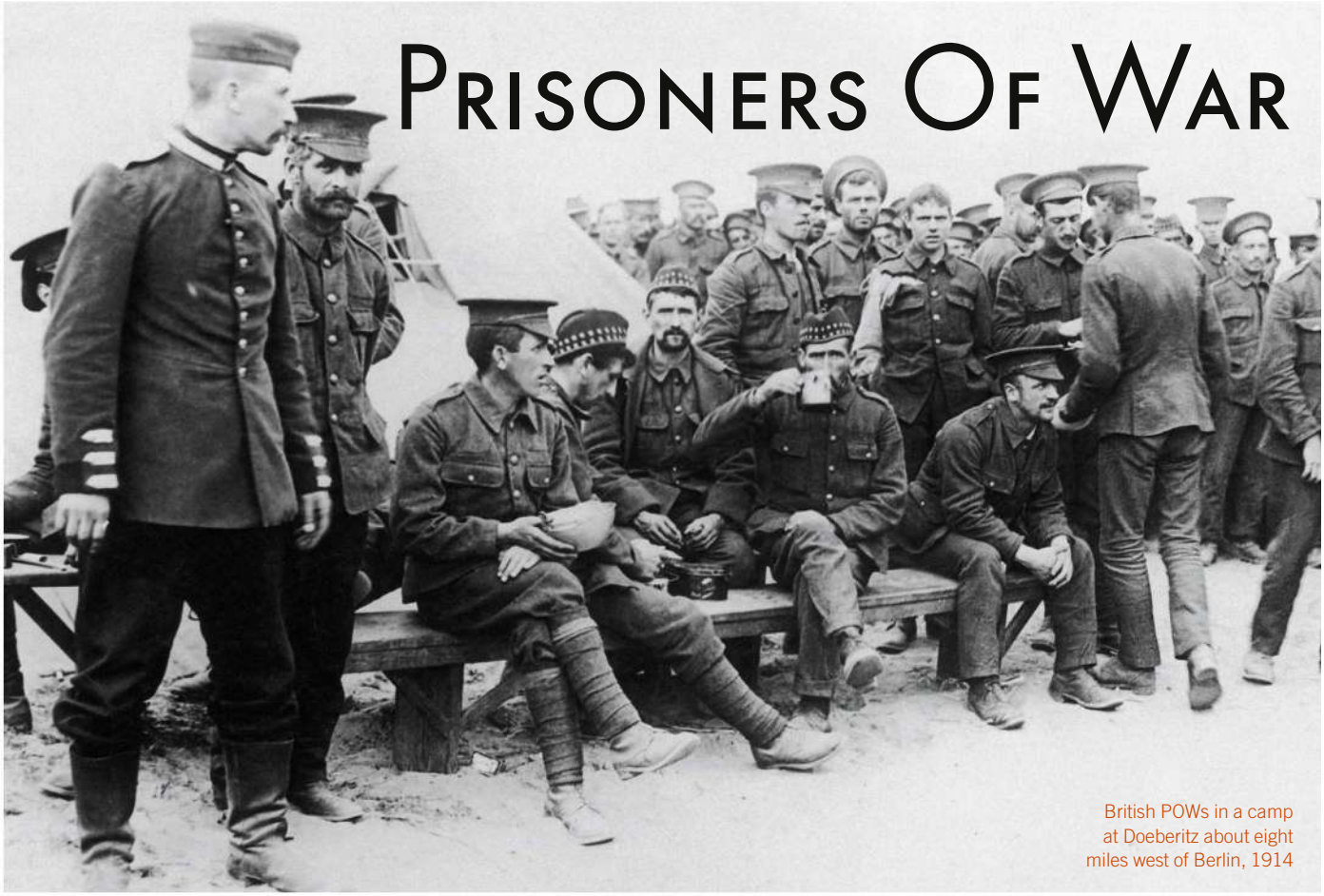
# Prisoners Of War



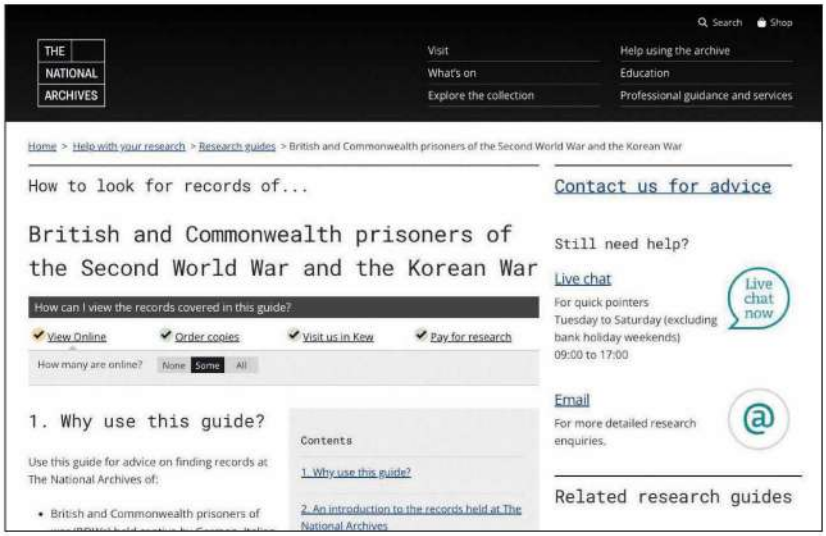
British POWs in a camp at Doeberitz about eight miles west of Berlin, 1914

**Jonathan Scott** reveals the essential sites for researching prisoners of war in your family

Viewers often scoff at the historical liberties taken by films such as *The Wooden Horse* (1950) and *The Great Escape* (1963), both inspired by true stories of breakouts from Stalag Luft III. However, it's worth remembering that Donald Pleasence, who played a forger losing his eyesight in *The Great Escape*, had himself been a POW during the Second World War. He joined the Royal Air Force, flying 60 missions as a wireless operator. In August 1944 his Lancaster was shot down, and he was captured and imprisoned in Stalag Luft I. So next time you're watching the film, getting ready to laugh at Steve McQueen motorbiking to Switzerland, just remember Pleasence's delivery of the lines "Shot down. Terrifying."

The subject of POWs appeared in the 2024 series of *Who Do You Think You Are?*, when *Line of Duty* actor Vicky McClure discovered that her great grandfather Harry had been captured when Singapore fell to Japanese forces in February 1942. He was held in a camp in Taiwan and forced to work in a copper mine, where he died in an accident.

GETTY IMAGES

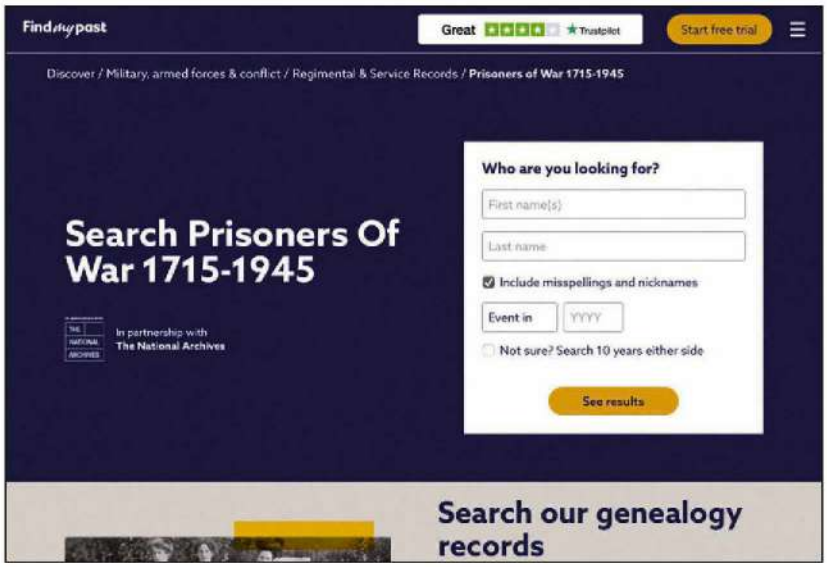



## THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

w **tinyurl.com/tna-guide-brit-pows-ww2-kor**

Since we last covered this topic, volunteers at TNA have completed a six-year project to digitally catalogue more than 200,000 records of Second World War POWs. These were the WO 416 file series, which have been sorted into numbered and ordered envelopes and added to TNA's online catalogue Discovery. So while you can't see the original documents online, you can search by name or service number. TNA has various relevant research guides, including this one covering the Second World War and the Korean War, which will lead you to material available through commercial partners. Earlier conflicts are covered in separate guides, and there's also one for researching enemy POWs held by Britain (**tinyurl.com/tna-guide-british-hands**).

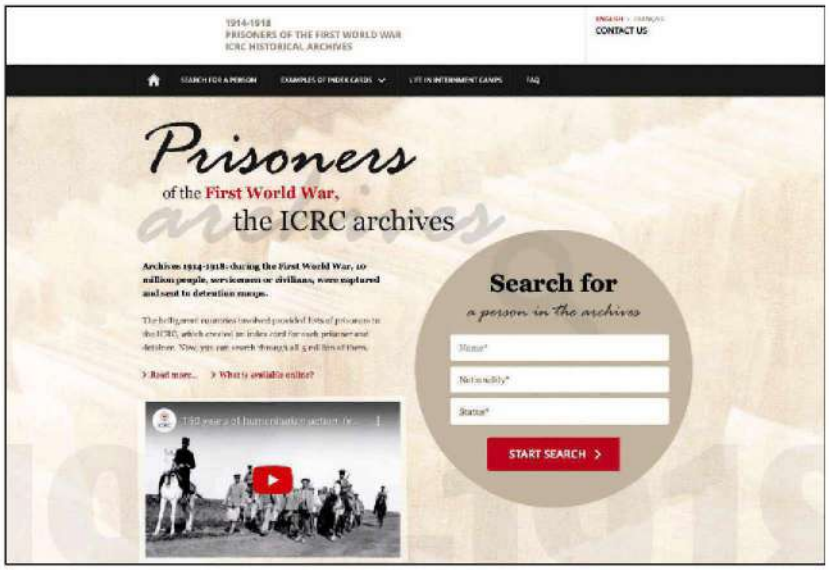
# BEST WEBSITES




## FINDMYPAST

w **bit.ly/fmp-pows-1715-1945**

Findmypast has the widest spread of material relating to this subject, which together comprise sources for tracing prisoners back to 1715. Highlights include lists from the War Office's Directorate of Prisoners of War (TNA series WO 392), Japanese Index Cards of Allied prisoners (WO 345), a database of 13,500 prisoners and civilian internees held in Singapore camps (WO 367), POW deaths across Europe and the Far East (WO 361), plus lists and rolls from Air Ministry intelligence reports (AIR 40). If you're researching further back you'll find records organised by conflict stretching all the way to the Napoleonic Wars.




## PRISONERS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

w **grandeguerre.icrc.org/en/**

In August 1914 the International Committee of the Red Cross established a POW agency in Geneva, Switzerland, to which all belligerents would submit lists of those captured. Millions of servicemen and civilians were sent to detention camps, so the agency received 400,000 pages of documents, recording not only their names, but also details of capture, camp transfers, as well as deaths in detention. From these documents the ICRC created index cards for each prisoner and detainee, and you can search all five million of them for free online. Remember that the cards also include names of men reported missing about whom inquiries were made.

## EXPERT'S CHOICE

**Chris Baker** is the creator of the site The Long, Long Trail (**longlongtrail.co.uk**)

English POWs working in the fields, c1915

I provide what I hope is a fairly comprehensive introduction to the subject of British soldiers taken as prisoners during the First World War at The Long, Long Trail: **longlongtrail.co.uk/soldiers/a-soldiers-life-1914-1918/british-soldiers-taken-as-prisoners-of-war/**. This is a fascinating topic, which doesn't tend to get as much publicity as the camps and escapees of the Second World War. During the First World War some 7,335 officers and 174,491 other ranks of the British Army were captured by the enemy – almost half of whom were taken between March and November in the last year of the war, thanks in part to a shift towards 'elastic defence' battle tactics that were more likely to leave combatants stranded.

British soldiers taken prisoner in France and Flanders were usually moved to Germany and incarcerated in camps, or retained to the rear of the battlefield to provide manual labour. Once in a camp, men were likely to be sent out on work teams known as *kommandos* and employed in quarries, mines, factories or farms – the upshot being that they might not have actually spent much time at the camp at which they were listed.

In terms of research into an individual solider, there are relatively few sources out there. My website includes a list of principal camps in Germany and it also links to one important resource – the records of the International Committee of the Red Cross that were released online back in 2014 (**grandeguerre.icrc.org/en/**). You'll also find a list of the small number of fragmentary sources that are held in this country.

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## ANCESTRY

w **ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/1601/**

Ancestry's Second World War POW liberation questionnaires were digitised from TNA's series WO 344. These will confirm name, rank, number, unit and home address. But they can also give an almost complete biography of time behind the wire, including date and place of capture; transfers between camps and hospitals; forced work; any illnesses or medical treatment; interrogations that took place; escape attempts; and details of treatment. The liberated POWs were also given the opportunity to bring to official notice any other matters – courageous acts by fellow prisoners or civilians who assisted them, or those who collaborated with the enemy.

## TAKING THE LONG WAY HOME

w **lamsdorflongmarch.com**

This harrowing website tells the story of 48 survivors of the forced marches that took place during the latter stages of the Second World War. The story starts in Lamsdorf, Upper Silesia (now Łambinowice in Poland), where tens of thousands of soldiers were held in Stalag VIIIB. In January 1945 orders were issued to march prisoners west to central German territory. Many perished through starvation, exposure, disease, or were shot while trying to escape. This site brings together documents, photographs and testimony, and was created by Dave Lovell and Ian Bowley, whose fathers (Privates Arthur Lovell and Ernest Ronald 'Ron' Bowley) were among the survivors.

# Go Further

**Eight more websites that you can't afford to miss**

## 392ND BOMB GROUP

w **b24.net**

This website includes sections on eight German camps with maps, photographs, government records and accounts.

## COFEPOW

w **cofepow.org.uk**

The website of the charity Children and Families of Far East Prisoners of War includes digitised liberation questionnaires, and casualty lists from both camps and the 'hell ships' that the Japanese used to transfer POWs.

## COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

w **cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/**

Details of those who died in captivity during both world wars are available through the commission's Debt of Honour database.

## IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUMS

w **iwm.org.uk/research/tracing-your-family-history/prisoners-of-war**

Visit for research advice and a list of useful sites.

## LAMSDORF REMEMBERED

w **lamsdorfremembered.co.uk**

This is another website focusing on Stalag VIIIB, through the eyes of former captive and Irish Guard Arthur Charles Evans.

## NEVER FORGOTTEN

w **powtaiwan.org**

Run by the Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society, this website focuses on POWs who were held on the island during the Second World War.

## STALAG LUFT III

w **stalagluft3.com**

As well as an extensive section describing life for POWs, here you will find pages on the long march and the famous Great Escape.

## THEGENEALOGIST

w **thegenealogist.co.uk/prisoner-of-war/**

The site's Prisoner of War database includes thousands of British and Commonwealth servicemen held captive.

Terraced houses on a residential street in Bristol. Legal documents can help you explore the history of your house, or that of your ancestor

# Title Deeds

**Chloe O'Shea** explains how you can use records of the transfer of property dating from the Middle Ages onwards

Title deeds are documents relating to property and land conveyance. While they are frequently used by house historians, their usefulness to genealogists as well should not be underestimated because there is much that you can discover.

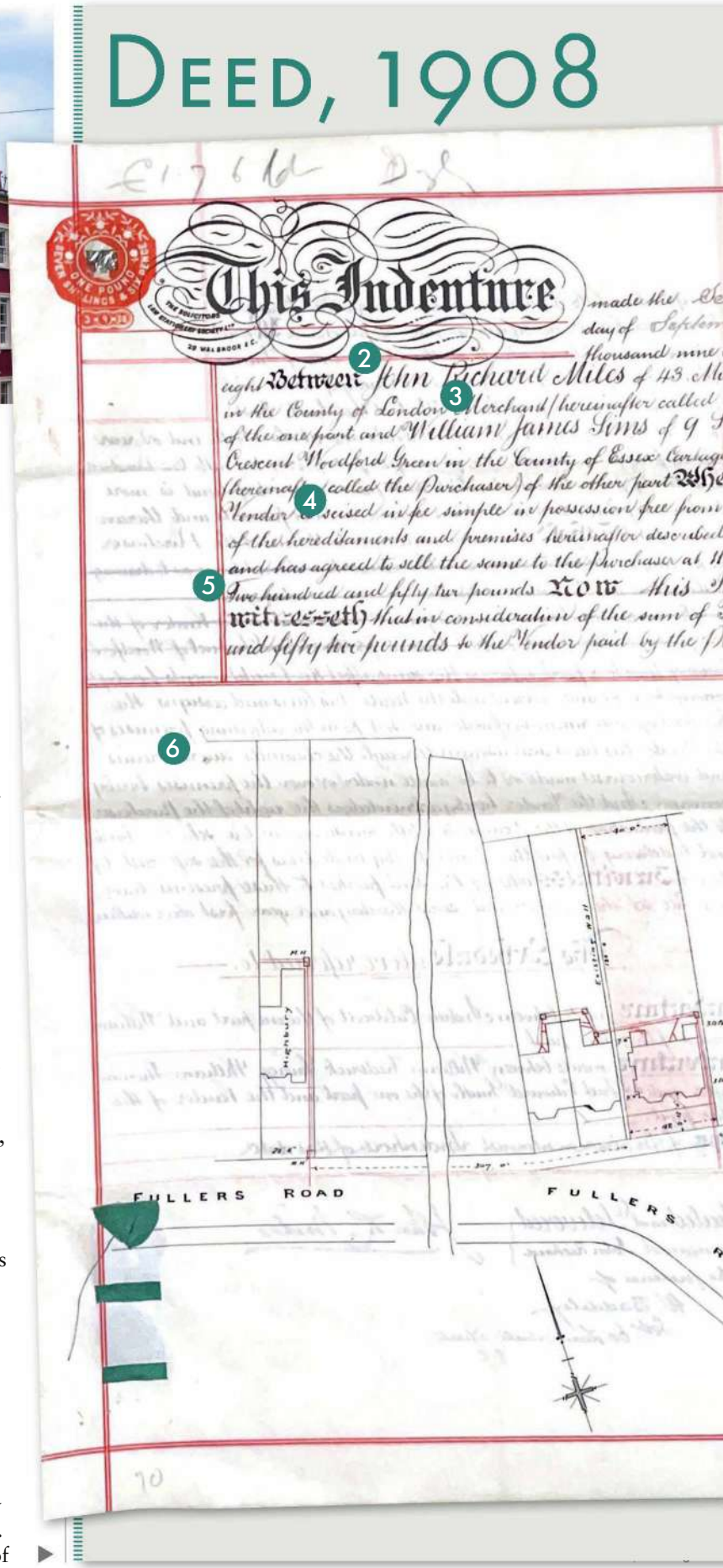
Written proof of purchasing property has long been important. The earliest examples you may come across include 'final concords' (fines of land) from the 12th century and 'common recoveries' from the 15th century. Both were abolished in 1833. These early records were written in Latin until 1733, and tell us the names of the vendor and purchaser with a description of the property or land in question. These are held at The National Archives at Kew (TNA; **nationalarchives.gov.uk**) and local archives.

The most likely historical deeds that you will come across are a 'bargain and sale' and a 'lease and release'. These date from the 16th century to the 19th. Within these records you can discover the names of those involved in the transaction, the date that the conveyance occurred, details of the property, and the price paid. The latter was not always accurate. Other types of deed transferring the ownership of property and land include 'feoffments' and 'quitclaims', both most commonly found in the 16th and 17th centuries, and you may also find evidence of mortgages and settlements. A majority of these deeds are held at local archives with some at TNA.

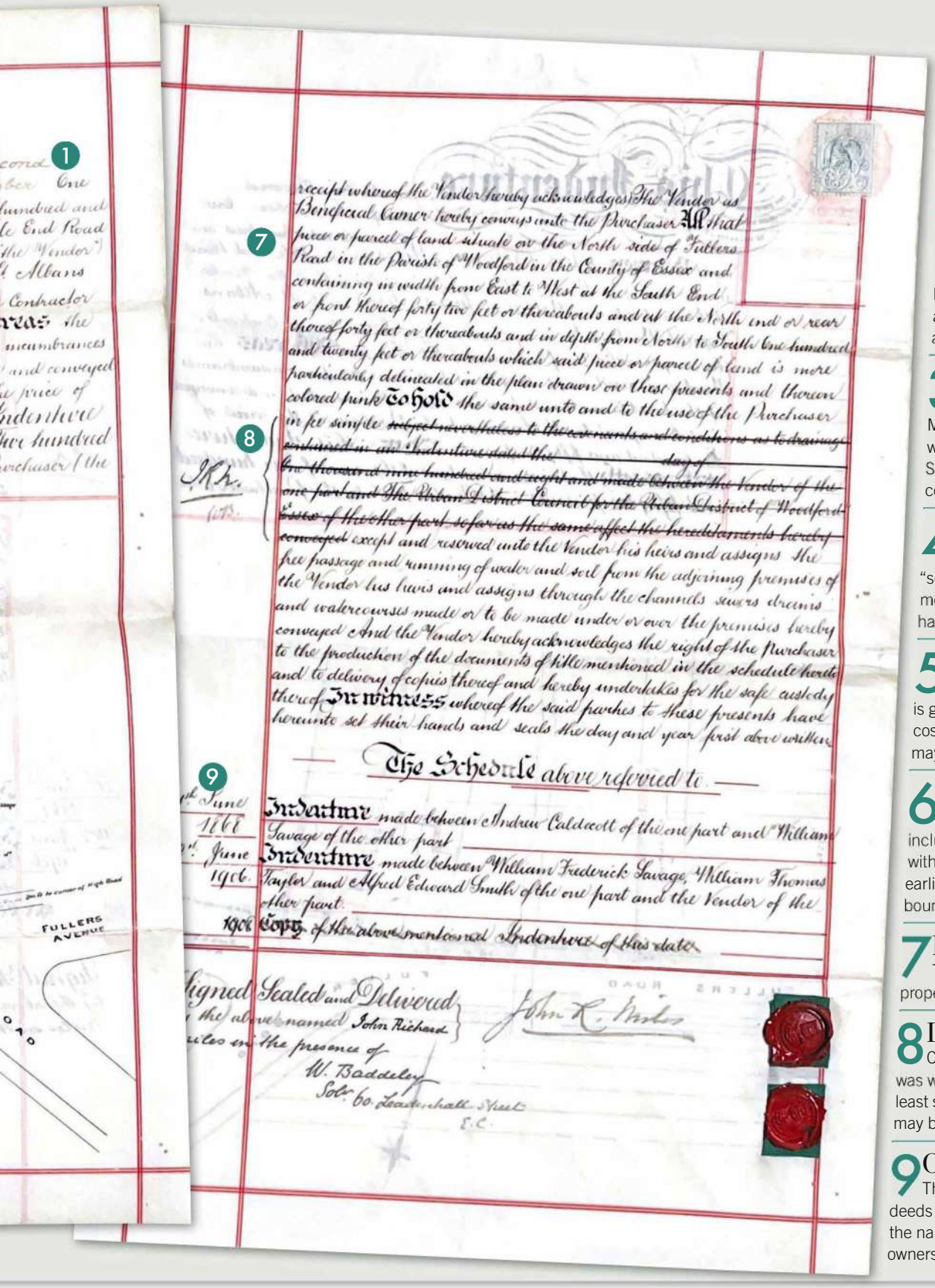
## Bundles Of Joy

When a property was conveyed by lease and release, two documents were created. Only one of the records may survive, but where they both do they are usually held in the same bundle. Like many other types of

## Deed, 1908



This deed is from a private collection, but similar ones can be found in local archives often in the deposited records of firms of solicitors. Survival rates are patchy though



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7 receipt whereof the Vendor hereby acknowledges The Vendor as Beneficial Owner hereby conveys unto the Purchaser All that piece or parcel of land situate on the North side of Fullers Road in the Parish of Woodford in the County of Essex and containing in width from East to West at the South End or front thereof forty two feet or thereabouts and at the North end or rear thereof forty feet or thereabouts and in depth from North to South one hundred and twenty feet or thereabouts which said piece or parcel of land is more particularly delineated in the plan drawn on these presents and thereon colored pink To hold the same unto and to the use of the Purchaser in fee simple

8 ~~subject nevertheless to the covenants and conditions as to drainage contained in an Indenture dated the day of one thousand nine hundred and eight and made between the Vendor of the one part and The Urban District Council for the Urban District of Woodford Essex of the other part so far as the same affect the hereditaments hereby conveyed~~ except and reserved unto the Vendor his heirs and assigns the free passage and running of water and soil from the adjoining premises of the Vendor his heirs and assigns through the channels sewers drains and watercourses made or to be made under or over the premises hereby conveyed And the Vendor hereby acknowledges the right of the Purchaser to the production of the documents of title mentioned in the schedule hereto and to delivery of copies thereof and hereby undertakes for the safe custody thereof In witness whereof the said parties to these presents have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first above written

The Schedule above referred to

9 ...th June 1861 Indenture made between Andrew Caldecott of the one part and William Savage of the other part

...th June 1906 Indenture made between William Frederick Savage, William Thomas Taylor and Alfred Edward Smith of the one part and the Vendor of the other part

1906 Copy of the above mentioned Indenture of this date

Signed Sealed and Delivered by the above named John Richard Miles in the presence of W. Baddeley Solr. 60 Leadenhall Street E.C.

John R. Miles

FULLERS AVENUE

**1 Date**
This record dates from 2 September 1908. The date is often given further down in older deeds.

**2 Parties**
The names and addresses of both the vendor and the purchaser are recorded.

**3 Jobs**
John Richard Miles is a merchant while William James Sims is a cartage contractor.

**4 Fee Simple**
The property is "seised in fee simple" meaning William will have full ownership.

**5 Price**
The correct price is given (£252). The cost in early deeds may be fictitious.

**6 Plan**
Plans were included from 1840 with some found earlier, showing the boundary and features.

**7 Description**
The location and property are described.

**8 Deletion**
Crossed-out text was written in error, so at least some of the details may be incorrect.

**9 Owners**
The dates of earlier deeds are provided plus the names of previous owners back to 1868.

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The mention of a blacksmith's workshop – here attached to a thatched cottage c1890 – in a deed will reveal a relation's job

deed, including fines and common recoveries, they surround a fictitious dispute.

Title deeds can give you the names of several generations of the same family. This may be due to simple inheritance from one person to another, or due to the popular three-life leases where the 'lives' were named. The latter might name a man, his son and his grandson, with their relationship, ages and occupations noted, although the 'lives' weren't necessarily relations or different generations. One of my ancestral deeds names the vendor's grandfather who initially bought the property.

The acreage of the land, the names of neighbours and the names of adjacent fields are often given. This information may help you to find the property on a map. The deed will often give your forebear's occupation. Where this is not given it is sometimes hinted at in the description of the property, for example if it is described as a blacksmith's shop or a wheelwright's yard. A previous land owner's date of death or the date that their will was written may be mentioned. Title deeds often include other historical documentation where it was needed. This can include copies of parish register entries, wills and civil registration certificates.

Until 1925, it was a legal requirement for all property owners to retain the deeds relating to their property. This resulted in property owners passing on large bundles of deeds to each other after a conveyance was completed. After 1925, when the deeds were no longer needed, many people held onto them and some were handed into county record offices. This means that you can often find bundles held in archives all relating to the same property.

Title deeds used to be very large documents. Lawyers were paid by the line, so it was in their interest to write as lengthy a document as possible. This means a lot of the wording is repetitive.

## Uncatalogued Treasure

Many deeds have yet to be catalogued by archives, so they are often lumped together under a vague heading such as 'Dorchester title deeds' and are not searchable by the vendor or purchaser's name. Arguably the biggest drawback is their low survival rate, because many people disposed of their deeds after the law changed in 1925.

The best way to find title deeds is via a local archive's catalogue or TNA's catalogue Discovery (**discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**), which contains information relating to local archives as well as its own collections. Deeds are not always held in the county archive you'd expect; as well as the fact that county boundaries change over the years, many deeds travelled with previous property owners and were deposited with their new nearest archive. So start your search by inputting your ancestor's name in Discovery. Note that the phrase 'title deed' may not appear in the holding; it may instead refer to the type of deed, such as lease and release or quitclaim.

### TOP TIP!

Title deeds are often signed by all parties, providing you with their signature or mark. Signatures or a distinctive mark can help you identify a relation in other records.

## Resources

**Take your research further**

### BOOKS

*Title Deeds for Family Historians*
**Tim Wormleighton**
*The Family History Partnership, 2012*
This short read is clearly laid out and a great introduction to the topic, with plenty of images.

*Tracing History Through Title Deeds*
**Nat Alcock**
*Pen & Sword, 2017*
This book explains how to use title deeds for genealogical research.

### WEBSITE

DEEDS IN DEPTH
w **nottingham.ac.uk/manuscriptsandspecialcollections/researchguidance/deedsindepth/introduction.aspx**
This highly informative online research guide from the University of Nottingham's Manuscripts and Special Collections gives fantastic examples of title deeds with common translations, and explains how property is held.

**CHLOE O'SHEA** is a genealogist and author (**thepastrevealed.co.uk**). Her latest book *Tracing Your Staffordshire Ancestors* will be published by Pen & Sword in May (RRP £15.99)

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**Day 5: Weissenkirchen**
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**Day 6: Linz**
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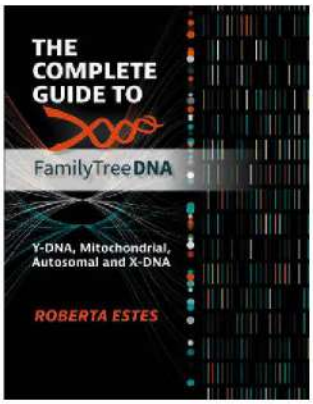


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# Q&A

Our team of experts offers tips and inspiration Edited By Claire Vaughan

Katherine Cobb is a member of AGRA based in Somerset

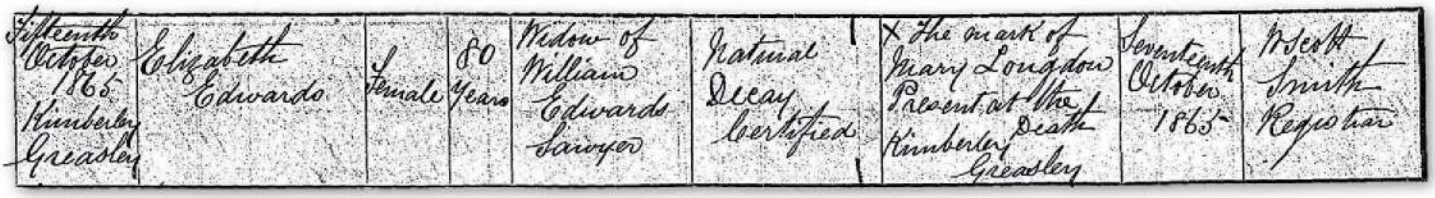
Antony Marr is a fellow, and previous chair, of AGRA and a former deputy registrar

Chris Paton is an author, tutor, genealogist and researcher

Jayne Shrimpton is a professional dress historian and portrait specialist

Steve Thomas is a genealogist, author and presenter

Phil Tomaselli is a military family history expert and author



| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fifteenth October 1865 Kimberley Greasley | Eliza beth Edwards | Female | 80 Years | Widow of William Edwards Sawyer | Natural Decay certified | X The mark of Mary Longdon Present at the Death Kimberley Greasley | Seventeenth October 1865 | M Scott Smith Registrar |

Antony has uncovered this record of the death of an Elizabeth Edwards in 1865, and suspects that she was Ray's forebear

## Have I found the right death record for my 3x great grandmother?

**Q** I'm researching my 3x great grandmother, Elizabeth Edwards (born c1785), née Raynor. She was married to William Edwards, a sawyer, who died in 1841. I have found her in the censuses for 1841, 1851 and 1861, but not in the 1871 census.

I have a death certificate for an Elizabeth Edwards of the correct age, who died in hospital near Greasley, Nottinghamshire, on 21 November 1870. The death was registered by Hannah Edwards, the name of my Elizabeth's granddaughter.

However, by that time, Hannah was married to Thomas Sisson and Elizabeth is described as the widow of Joseph Edwards, a coal miner, not William.

Hannah was only eight months old when her grandfather died, so would not have known him. Could she have assumed that her eldest uncle, Joseph, a coal miner, was named after his father and given that name? I can find no other possible death record for Elizabeth.

**Roy Milnes**

**A** When looking for an elusive family record, it can be tempting to find ways to explain away evidence that doesn't quite fit with what we know already. Of course, it's always possible that the informant or the registrar may have made errors in the information given or recorded, but it's important to look for any other evidence to support your theory, or indeed to discount it.

**It's important to look for any other evidence to support your theory**

So we need to look at all of the information that the certificate you have gives – was there another Elizabeth Edwards in the area married to a coal miner called Joseph? Could she have had a relative called Hannah perhaps, who lived in Bramcote?

The 1871 census shows a Hannah Edwards, the wife of John Edwards, in Bramcote and both come from neighbouring Wollaton. Could the Elizabeth, for whom you've found the death record, be John's mother? A Joseph Edwards did marry an Elizabeth Stones in Wollaton in 1809, and later censuses show him as a miner, so I think that you do have the wrong record.

You mentioned that you had found no other death that could be your Elizabeth, but searching the General Register Office's online indexes for the Basford Registration District at **www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content** does show another Elizabeth Edwards, aged 80, who died on 13 October 1865 in Kimberley, Nottinghamshire.

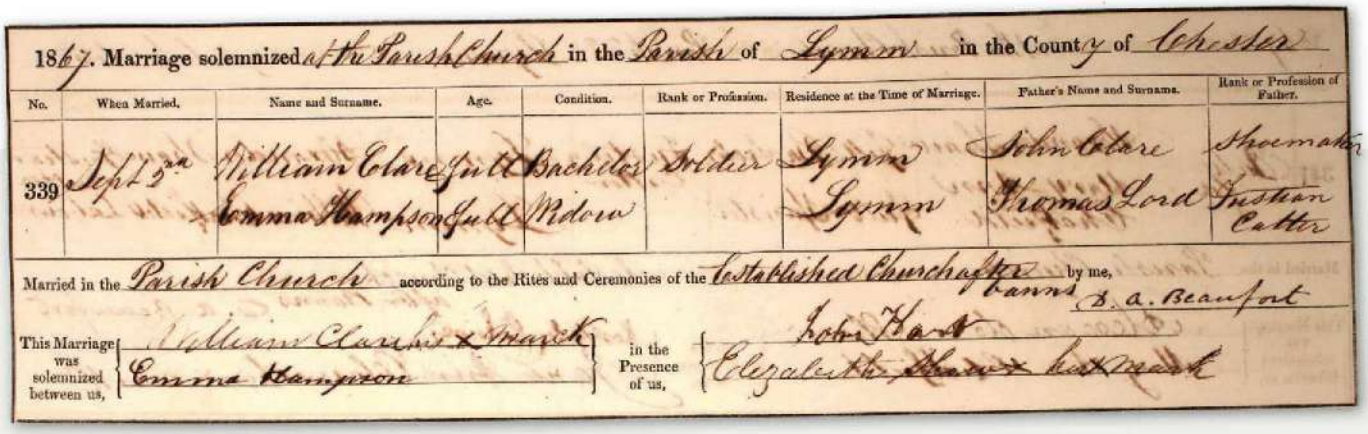
She was the widow of William Edwards, a sawyer, and the informant was her daughter, Mary (under her married name of Longdon). All these details correspond exactly with your 3x great grandmother.

She was buried at Holy Trinity, Kimberley, Nottinghamshire, on 18 October 1865.

**Antony Marr**

**HAVE YOU HIT A BRICK WALL?** Please email your questions or family photographs to the following address: **wdytyaquestions@ourmedia.co.uk**

If selected, your query will be answered on these pages. Please note that we receive a large volume of correspondence each month, and cannot reply to each message individually. You are more likely to receive a response if you keep the question and background information concise (no more than 150 words), with a clear goal of enquiry.



1867. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of Lymm in the County of Chester

| No. | When Married. | Name and Surname. | Age. | Condition. | Rank or Profession. | Residence at the Time of Marriage. | Father's Name and Surname. | Rank or Profession of Father. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 339 | Sept 2nd | William Clare | Full | Bachelor | Soldier | Lymm | John Clare | Shoemaker |
| | | Emma Hampson | Full | Widow | | Lymm | Thomas Lord | Fustian Cutter |

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church after Banns by me, S. a. Beaufort

This Marriage was solemnized between us, William Clare his x mark, Emma Hampson

in the Presence of us, John Hart, Elizabeth Hart her x mark

William Clare married Emma in 1867. He was her second husband, but what happened to him? Emma had further partners, but had William died?

# What happened to William Clare?

**Q** Emma Lord (born 1845) married Richard Hampson in 1865 and they had a daughter, Emma, in February 1867. Richard died and she married William Clare, a soldier, in September 1867 in Lymm, Cheshire. They had a son, William, in 1869, but by 1871 Emma is "wife" to a Thomas Atherton in Manchester, with two children, Emma Hampson and William Atherton. Another, Zillah Atherton, was born in 1873. Thomas died and, in 1880, Emma married Joseph Whitehouse, and had a further five children (the eldest called Ishmael). Did Emma not marry Thomas as William was still alive at that point?
**Pat Hastings**

**A** The British Army Worldwide Indexes for 1861 and 1871 are useful when searching for a man missing from the census, and details of what they offer can be found at Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**). The 1871 index includes seven soldiers named William Clare, of whom three appear to be recent recruits. By using the service numbers of the other four, see whether you can piece together their military careers.

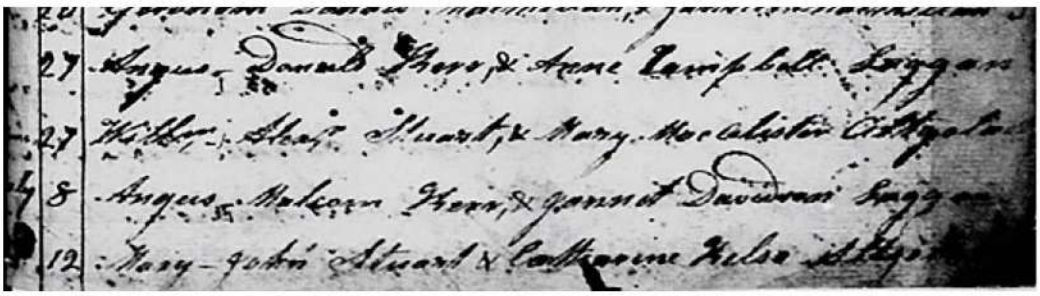
Investigating any death records with an occupation of "soldier" or "former soldier" might shed light on what became of William. Many William Clare deaths were registered in 1869–1880, but by checking age at death, the list could be reduced to about 20 and probably whittled down further by comparing burial registers, census entries and newspaper reports. You can order digital images from the General Register Office (**www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content**) at £3 each.

Unless a DNA match throws some light on the matter, it probably will not be possible to prove who was the father of Emma's son William. The 1871 census records both Emma's children with the surname Atherton, although it seems extremely unlikely that Emma's eldest child was Thomas Atherton's daughter. That being the case, it cannot be assumed that William was Thomas' child.

Incidentally, in the 1881 census, not only are William and Zillah recorded as Joseph Whitehead's stepchildren, but Ishmael is recorded as his stepson, suggesting that Emma had another, unidentified, partner.
**Katherine Cobb**

# Is my forebear's birthplace on Arran?

**Q** My great great grandfather, Angus Kerr, was born on the Isle of Arran, Buteshire. In 1809, baptismal records for the parish of Kilmory, Shiskine and Lochranza show the place name "Lagg an" against two possible entries, with a space between the two words. I can find no such place in the parish (although there is a hamlet called Lagg), but on Arran there's a Laggan in the old parish of Kilbride. How can I confirm which he came from? And what do the letters "an" denote after a place name?
**John Pettit**



John has hit a brick wall when trying to trace his great great grandfather Angus Kerr's birthplace of "Lagg an"

**A** The addition of "-an" to a word can sometimes be used to indicate a smaller version of something, for example a "lochan" as opposed to a "loch", with origins in Gaelic, but I don't think that this is the case here, because the "-an" is never recorded as a separate word. I have looked at the records in question, and believe that they do in fact show the word "Laggan"; the gap is merely a stylistic break in the handwriting.

As such, the first question to ask is whether there is, in fact, a place called Laggan in the parish in question. The National Library of Scotland has a series of maps, including Ordnance Survey maps, at **maps.nls.uk**, which you can freely consult. In addition the website ScotlandsPlaces (**scotlandsplaces.gov.uk**) hosts the Ordnance Survey Name Books, listing the place names encountered by the survey teams, with information on each. A further site worth checking is Ainmean Àite na h-Alba/Gaelic Place-Names of Scotland at **ainmean-aite.scot**. From these, I have not identified a Laggan in Kilmory, Shiskine and Lochranza, so it may have been elsewhere.

If Angus died after 1855, his death record should note his parents' names. With this information, you can look for their marriage record, which may flag up a link to one of the other Laggans previously identified. Census records may also help to identify Angus' parish of birth, rather than that of his baptism.

Finally, Arran Heritage Museum (**arranmuseum.co.uk**), near Brodick, may be worth contacting for advice.
**Chris Paton**

## Picture Analysis

# Tips for dating an amateur snapshot from the 1930s

This is a favourite image, passed down by my father, William George ('Sonny') Shrimpton, 1916–1999. He has written the date of this amateur snapshot, 1932, on the back.

This scene portraying two or three generations of the family is similar to many surviving outdoor photographs that were taken during the early to mid-20th century. My detailed analysis may help *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine* readers to date and interpret their own snapshots from the same period. We know the exact year of this photo, but otherwise might consider various clues. The divided-back postcard reverse is significant. This popular format first appeared in 1902, dying out by 1950. Both professional and amateur photographers used postcard mounts, but amateur photography was rare among the wider population before the 1910s, many households acquiring their first cameras between the wars. In the early to mid-20th century most amateur shots were taken outdoors due to the light. Their locations may be identifiable; this setting is probably a North London public park near the family's home.

The garments and accessories worn here reflect early to mid-1930s styles, although, characteristically, the female fashions are more closely dateable than the men's modes. In front is 'Sonny' (15) with his sisters: left, Doris (16/17) and right, Amy (18). Their parents, Amy Shrimpton (née Brooks), 1882–1972, and William Shrimpton, 1883–1957, are seated far left and far right. The elderly man may be my great grandfather, Alfred Thomas Brooks, 1861–1948.

**Jayne Shrimpton**

### 1 Older accessories

My grandma wears the pearl necklace and bar shoes typical of the 1920s that some women retained in the early 1930s.

### 2 Younger trends

In any mixed group scene, the outfits worn by teenagers and young adults usually follow new trends more closely than their elders' relatively sober or formal attire.

### 3 Spectacles

The older couple in the centre sport the round-shaped spectacles usual between the 1920s and 1950s. This cloth cap follows the broad, flat style typical between the wars.

### 4 Casual wear

The youths are dressed more casually. 'Sonny' wears white 'flannels' and an open-necked, short-sleeved sports shirt.

### 5 Girls' dresses

The sisters wear frocks displaying fashionable soft, flowing fabrics and bow-trimmed necklines with brimmed hats.

### 6 'Sunday best' suits

In the early to mid-1930s, some older men, such as my grandad far right, still favoured traditional three-piece business or 'Sunday best' suits on weekends.

# What is the white star-shaped medal in Dame Judi's episode?

Reg was intrigued by the medal shaped like a white star that he glimpsed in Dame Judi Dench's episode

**Q** I have just watched the *Who Do You Think You Are?* episode featuring Dame Judi Dench, and am interested in the white star-shaped medal that appeared (on the left of the photograph). Can you give me any information about it?
**Reg Brown**

**A** Sadly, I missed the *WDYTYA?* episode on Dame Judi Dench when it was originally on, so I came to this cold. It was immediately clear though that the medal you're asking about isn't a British campaign medal like the two to its right (the British War Medal and First World War Victory Medal), and that it was associated with a British or Commonwealth officer – the white and purple stripes are the Military Cross (MC). Dame Judi's Wikipedia page (**en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judi_Dench**) told me that her father, Reginald Arthur Dench, had won the MC twice in the First World War, so it seemed likely this medal was his, too.

The black ribbon and star shape suggest it is an honour and the badge of an officer in the Order of St John. This order was incorporated in Britain in 1888 by Queen Victoria, and is closely linked to medical organisations (think St John's Ambulance Brigade) and to St John's medical organisations worldwide.

I searched the digital archive of the *London Gazette* via **thegazette.co.uk/all-notices/** **notice** for "Reginald Arthur Dench", and several clear references came up including a citation for one of his MCs. One notice, dated 1 January 1946, shows him being appointed a serving brother in the Order of St John and a further, dated 7 January 1955, when he was promoted to the rank of officer.

Reginald was a student when he enlisted, but qualified as a medical doctor in 1923 and is recorded in the 1935 Medical Directory as an honorary life member of St John's Ambulance Brigade. This is presumably the reason for his white star-shaped honour.
**Phil Tomaselli**

**TOP TIP** If you find a citation for bravery recorded in the *Gazette*, check the relevant War Diary to see if it provides further details. WW1 Diaries are available via **nationalarchives.gov.uk** and WW2 Diaries are gradually being added to **ancestry.co.uk**.

# Why can't I find a birth record for James Barker?

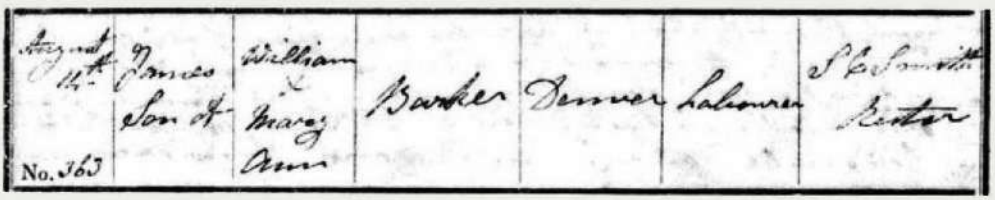
**Q** I'm looking for a birth record for my great great grandfather, James Barker. His parents were William and Mary Ann Barker. He had eight siblings and I've found all their baptisms, but not his. There was a James born into the family in 1826, but he died in 1828. James married Elizabeth Green in 1855 at St Olave, Southwark, Surrey, aged 27 years, making his birth year about 1828. They had a son William who was baptised in West Dereham, Norfolk, in 1856, so the family must have had links with that area. James died there on 3 September 1884.
**Wendy Barker**

**A** As any search of censuses or burials will reveal, in times past a person's precise age was often uncertain. So the first thing to establish is whether the 1826 baptism could be that of your great great grandfather.

I made a search to see whether this James died in infancy. Although no burial at West Dereham was indexed on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**), as indexing errors can occur I searched the register, which showed that James was buried on 6 July 1826, aged three months. The year of burial is incorrectly indexed. That being the case, why has no baptism been found for your ancestor?

When a brick wall is encountered, it is always worth looking for anomalies. In doing so, two things became apparent: there is a gap in the baptisms of James' siblings at West Dereham between 1826 and 1834, and on the 1871 census James' place of birth was recorded as Denver, Norfolk, not West Dereham as in other censuses. Might James' parents have lived elsewhere around the time of his birth, perhaps at Denver, in which case could he perhaps have been baptised there?

If the age on his marriage certificate is accurate, James was born between June 1827 and June 1828. I searched the Denver baptisms and found that James' parents lived in the parish 1827–1831 and had three children baptised there, including James on 14 August 1827 and his brothers, John Cornelius in April 1829 and Robert Land (incorrectly indexed as Jonathan) in November 1831.
**Katherine Cobb**


August 14th | James Son of | William & Mary Ann | Barker | Denver | Labourer | S Catherine Sister
No. 363

Katherine found James' baptism in Denver, Norfolk, along with two more siblings

Murphy
Die 18 nat et die 9 Aprilis 1884 baptizatus est
Edwardus Joannes Murphy filius Edwardi Jacobi et
Maria (Jane) Joanna Murphy (olim) conjugum:
a me Clemente Dunn
Patrinus fuit Henricus Groves Matrina fuit Emma Groves

Steve discovered that Edward John Murphy had been baptised under the name "Edwardus Joannes Murphy" in Soho Square St Patrick on 9 April 1884, thanks to the Roman Catholic baptism registers available digitally on Findmypast

# How can I find out more about my great grandparents from Ireland and Middlesex?

**Q** For years I have been trying to progress research into my great grandparents: Edward John Murphy (born c1844 in Dublin, Ireland) and (Mary) Jane Vincent (born between 1843 and 1848 in Marylebone, Middlesex). They had a son, Edward John Murphy, in 1884. In the 1881 census I found a Jane Vincent, widow, aged 38, a servant, born in Marylebone, Middlesex, and her daughter Elizabeth, aged 15, a servant, born in St Annes, Soho, living at 1 Stacey Street. I'm not sure who Elizabeth's father was, or what happened to her. I can't find Edward senior in the census for 1881, and neither him nor Jane in 1871. I've also never found birth or marriage records for them. Can you help me fill in some of the gaps?

**Derek Murphy**

**DEREK MURPHY** is suffering from a research brick wall regarding his great grandparents

Derek's great grandmother's daughter Elizabeth Vincent was baptised in 1866

**A** When looking for Irish ancestors, it's always worth searching beyond the confines of civil registration to see if they were Roman Catholics. This is especially likely if they came from the southern counties. Such an investigation can reveal important additional information.

However, the search must be made using the Latin version of their first name since this was the language of the Roman Catholic Church. So a search for "Edward John" would not succeed, but if you search the England Roman Catholic parish baptisms at Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**) for "Edwardus Joannes Murphy", you will find a baptism for Edward junior in Soho Square St Patrick dated 9 April 1884.

You'll notice that the father has an additional forename "Jacobi" meaning "James". Similarly the mother's names are rendered as "Maria Joanne" and not Mary Jane. Most strikingly, no mother's maiden name is given after the word "olim" meaning "once was". In civil registration, it is included as "Vincent", but not here. Did Jane balk at the idea of lying about her marital status before a priest, while being less concerned when registering the birth?

In any event, I could found no marriage in English or Irish general registration between 1864 and 1884, and the format of the baptism strongly suggests that no such event took place.

The additional forename for Edward senior does hold out a little more hope that a baptism might be found in Dublin or elsewhere, but this could be a difficult search without a father's name, which a marriage certificate would provide. A previous union might be worth looking for, since he was 40 years of age when his only son was born. Also bear in mind that it was not possible for him to divorce because he was a Catholic, so perhaps that stopped him marrying Jane.

With regard to Jane Vincent, you have provided the information that she was born in Marylebone according to census returns, and quite possibly had a daughter, Elizabeth, born in Soho, Middlesex, in about 1865.

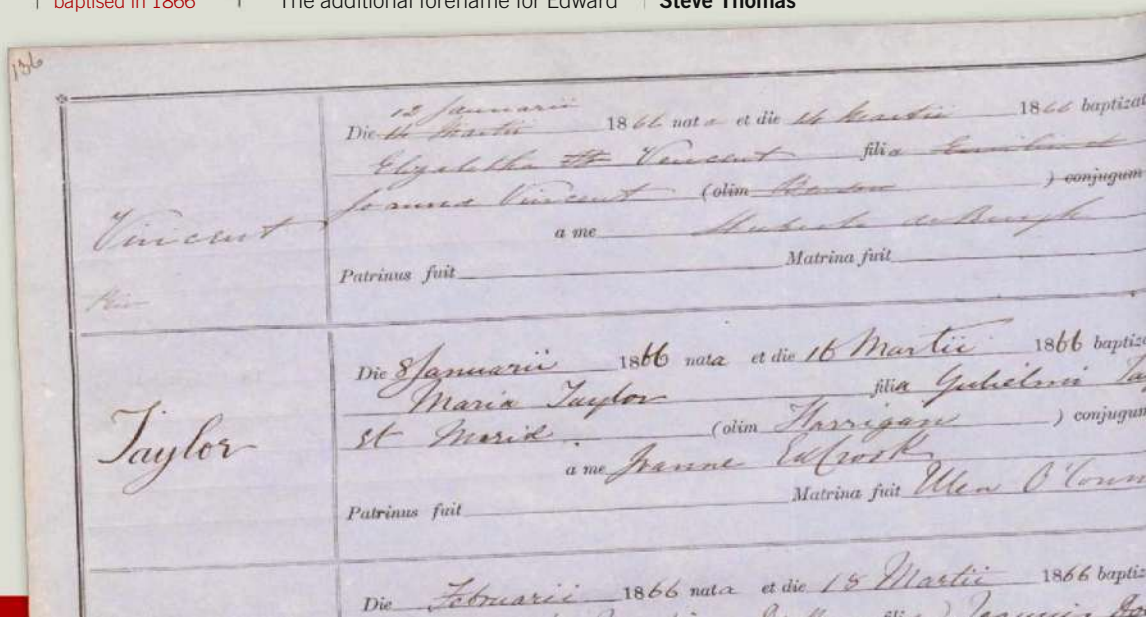
Again, taking recourse to the Roman Catholic registers, I found Elizabeth's baptism in Soho, Warwick Street (Bavarian Chapel), Our Lady of the Assumption & St Gregory, Middlesex, in 1866 at Findmypast.

The entry is very faint, and the handwriting is hard to decipher. Firstly, note that there seems to be some hesitation about which surname to use, but the name "Vincent" was entered. Then the name of the father is very obscure, but may be "Emile" or similar. Vincent is a very popular surname in France, which may be worth exploring.

Jane is rendered "Joanna", as before, and her maiden name appears to be "Benson" or "Beason". No marriage to an Edward Murphy could be found under either possibility. The name of the father appears to be struck through and, again, we must cast some doubt on the information's reliability.

Searching every possible source is important, and hopefully this has provided you with some new avenues to take your research further.

**Steve Thomas**


Vincent
Die 12 Januarii 1866 nata et die 14 Martii 1866 baptizata
Elizabetha Vincent filia
Joanna Vincent (olim Benson) conjugum
a me
Patrinus fuit Matrina fuit
Taylor
Die 8 Januarii 1866 nata et die 16 Martii 1866 baptizata
Maria Taylor filia Gulielmi
St Marie (olim Harrigan) conjugum
a me Joanne Allcock
Patrinus fuit Matrina fuit Ellen O'Conn
Die Februarii 1866 nata et die 15 Martii 1866 baptiz

# What did Harry do in India in the First World War?

**Q** This postcard was my grandad's. Could you tell me what Harry might have been doing in India during the First World War, and what regiment he served in?
**Janette Martin**

**A** The clue here is the postmark on the back of the photo: "Ahmednagar". Now called Ahilya Nagar, it's in the Indian state of Maharashtra, in the western peninsula. During the First World War it was the site of an internment camp for German, Austrian, Turkish and other 'hostile' civilians from India, East Africa and Thailand. The inmates were guarded by European troops.

Early in the war, regular British battalions left India for Europe to be replaced by Territorial Units, and then by (mainly) Garrison Battalions consisting of men who were less fit (often previously wounded). From The Long, Long Trail (**longlongtrail.co.uk**), I learnt that Ahmednagar was garrisoned by 2nd Garrison Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers (NF) in 1917/1918. Possibly they guarded the camp.

The Medal Index Card for Harry, 64109, 2nd Garrison Battalion, NF, is on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) and The National Archives' website (**nationalarchives.gov.uk**). It shows that he first served abroad with the North Staffordshire Regiment in 1915 in the Balkans (Gallipoli). The medal roll, also at Ancestry, shows that he served in the 7th North Staffs there – it's presumably where he was injured.

His pension cards are available on Forces War Records (**uk.forceswarrecords.com**). They say that he was born in 1887 and, when discharged in 1919, lived in Madeley Heath near Crewe, Cheshire.

The War Diary for the 7th North Staffs is on Ancestry. Unfortunately there doesn't appear to be one for the 2nd Garrison Battalion, NF.
**Phil Tomaselli**

## 1 UNIFORMS

The uniforms of both men are clearly for a tropical climate: light-cloth tunics and shorts, with no rank, trade or other badges (see the second annotation, however). These were normally only worn lightly fixed to be removed for frequent laundering – necessary because of the heat!

## 2 SERVICE CHEVRONS

Harry wears three service chevrons on his right sleeve, one for each year (or part year) spent abroad. The chevron for 1914 service is always much darker in photos (it was red not blue), and appeared lowest of any group. Its absence confirms that he served overseas from 1915 or 1916, and the photo was probably taken in 1918.

## 3 HELMET

The headgear is the Wolseley pattern tropical helmet, made of cork (for lightness) with a cloth pugaree around the body and leather straps. The unit cap badge would normally be fixed to the front, or possibly represented by a cloth version on the side. Its absence suggests that they're newly arrived in India.

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# The Literary Links Of Marlow

**Rosemary Collins** talks to members of the Marlow Local History Group about a new exhibition

The group's exhibition at Marlow Museum

The town of Marlow in Buckinghamshire has a recorded history dating back to 1015. The members of the Marlow Local History Group (**marlowsociety.org.uk/local-history/**) are dedicated to researching and preserving the town's rich heritage.

"We do a number of different things," reveals Adam Baxter, the group's chair. "We organise talks. We run guided walks around the town, and arrange visits to a couple of places each year. We answer history queries too – we have members doing research into different topics. We also have archives of material that have been built up over time."

More recently, Heather Adams, the group's secretary, was carrying out research for the walks when she discovered that Marlow has played a significant role in the literary history of Britain.

**Mary Shelley finished *Frankenstein* (1818) while she was living in Marlow**

"I did some work on Mary Shelley," she says, "because she finished her novel *Frankenstein* (1818) while she was living in Marlow. I think that's amazing because most people think that it was written in Geneva, and we ought to be shouting about the connection to our town. So I decided that it might be fun to have a look at the other authors who are associated with Marlow, which has been a magnet for a whole series of really important writers. Mary came here with her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley, one of our great Romantic poets, and a hundred years later, poet TS Eliot arrived in Marlow. And he wrote to his mother that he was living in the street where Shelley used to live."

Other celebrated writers with connections to Marlow include the creator of Noddy and the Famous Five Enid Blyton, Kenneth Grahame the author of *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), Jerome K Jerome the novelist behind *Three Men in a Boat* (1889), and Edgar Wallace, an author so popular in the 1930s that one in every four books read was written by him. He also contributed to the screenplay for *King Kong* (1933).

"During the late 19th century," Heather says, "Marlow was quite a leisure town, so people would retire here or come down here for the summer. And so lots of authors used to do that."

In addition to both a guided walk and a talk about the town's literary heritage, the group has curated a new exhibition at Marlow Museum named 'Writers of Marlow: From Frankenstein to Noddy'. Heather did the research, wrote the booklet and captions, and sourced exhibits from a wide range of places. "An antiquarian bookshop in Henley was able to lend us first-edition copies of some of the titles. We also went along to the River & Rowing Museum in the town, which has a large archive dedicated to Kenneth Grahame, and were able to get original material including letters from his wife to an actor who played Ratty in a theatrical production. Percy Bysshe Shelley went to Eton College so we also visited the school's archive. They lent us a watercolour one of Shelley's friends had painted just two weeks before the poet died aged 29 in a boating accident in 1822. It shows the boat and the last home he lived in when he was in Italy."

The exhibition has had a very positive reception, and has been chosen as a finalist in the 'Best Cultural Exhibition' category of Buckinghamshire Culture's Bucks Spark Awards. "Anything that gives publicity to how important Marlow was in terms of our literary heritage I think is great," Heather says.

**TELL YOUR STORY**

**Share your local history project with us and you could appear in the magazine!**

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *rosemary.collins@ourmedia.co.uk*

## Discover More

**Marlow Museum**
a **Court Garden, Pound Lane, Marlow SL7 2AE**
t 01628 484415
e *contact@marlowmuseum.org*
w **marlowmuseum.uk/events_displays01/**

The 'Writers of Marlow' exhibition runs until 25 March. You can find out more about the Marlow Local History Group at **marlowsociety.org.uk/local-history/**.

# THE BIG PICTURE

Celebrating our ancestors caught on camera

GETTY IMAGES

# Seeing Is Believing

**Soldiers in England carry an inflatable Sherman tank, c1939**

We are lucky to live in an age of endless technological advances that would have dazzled our 19th-century forebears, but the widespread availability of frighteningly credible fake photographs produced in an instant using generative AI tools is a definite disadvantage. Here, the photo is 100 per cent real, but the tank is made of rubber. However, such decoys, as unconvincing and even comical as they may have looked close up, played a very serious role in both saving soldiers' lives and securing the Allies' victory during the Second World War.

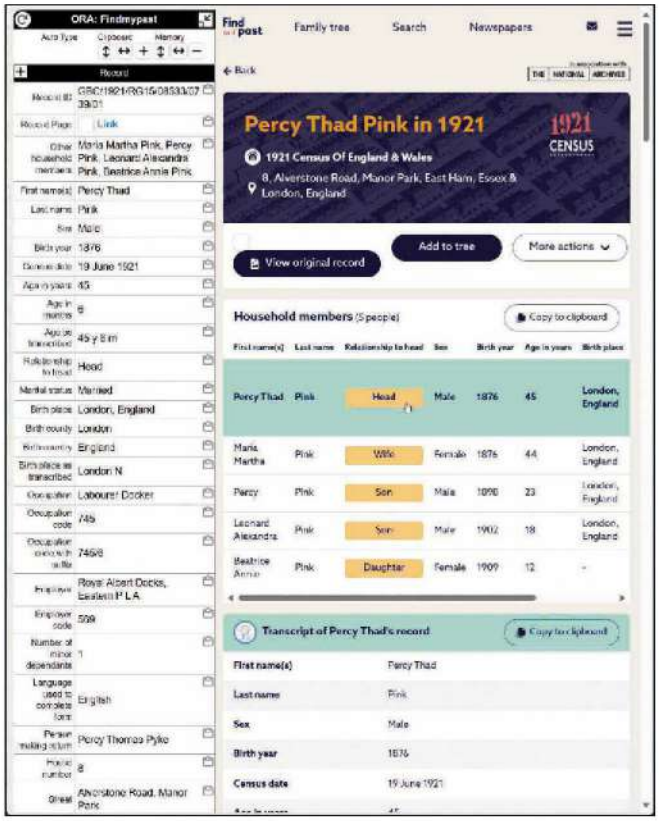
The ingenious tricksters behind such fakery were continuing a tradition that has existed ever since people first took up arms against each other. As no less an authority than the Chinese military strategist and philosopher Sun Tzu explained in his 5th-century BCE treatise *The Art of War*, "All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near."

So it is no surprise that a wide range of decoys were deployed en masse to confuse and distract German forces ahead of the pivotal invasion of Normandy on 6 June 1944 – D-Day – as part of a multifaceted and comprehensive deception strategy codenamed Operation Fortitude.

A key element was the creation of the First US Army Group (FUSAG), a terrifyingly formidable force – at least in theory – consisting of inflatable tanks and lorries and equally fake landing craft assembled at Dover, which once spotted from the air by reconnaissance aircraft convinced the German command that Calais, about 180 miles north-east of Normandy, would be the target instead.

Then, on the day itself, the Royal Air Force dropped hundreds of dummy parachutists made of sackcloth, sand and straw to simulate attacks from the air miles from the drop zones that the genuine paratroopers would use.

Sun Tzu would have been proud.




# Speed up your online research with the ORA

**Nick Peers** explains how the Online Repository Assistant (ORA) helps you work with records

Genealogical software such as Family Tree Maker and RootsMagic make it easy to incorporate records from certain websites into your family tree, but their web-merging features are usually restricted to just one or two online sites. And what if your chosen program – such as Family Historian – doesn't offer any form of online record-merging?

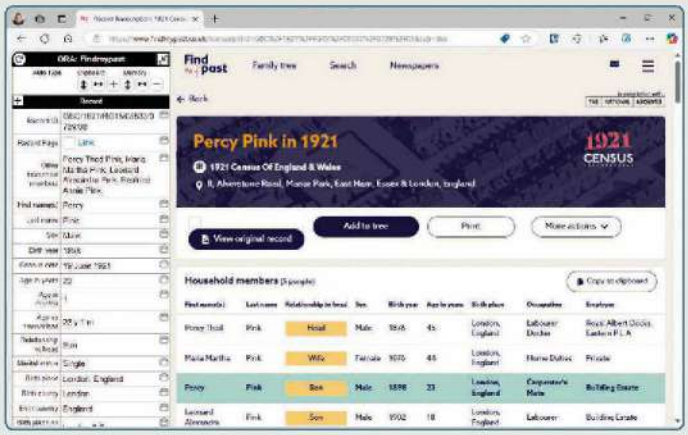
One solution is to invest $24 a year (about £19.50) in a subscription to the Online Repository Assistant (ORA). This Windows-only program uses your browser to provide powerful tools that help you manage your research, and simplify the process of copying information into any family history program from such sites as Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**), Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**), MyHeritage (**myheritage.com**) and TheGenealogist (**thegenealogist.co.uk**).

The ORA is compatible with all of the major browsers, including Chrome, Edge and Firefox, and its Auto Type tool can transfer online records with a single click. Our guide explains the core features, so read it through then head over to **ora-extension.com/en/index.htm#/** if you want to try it out.

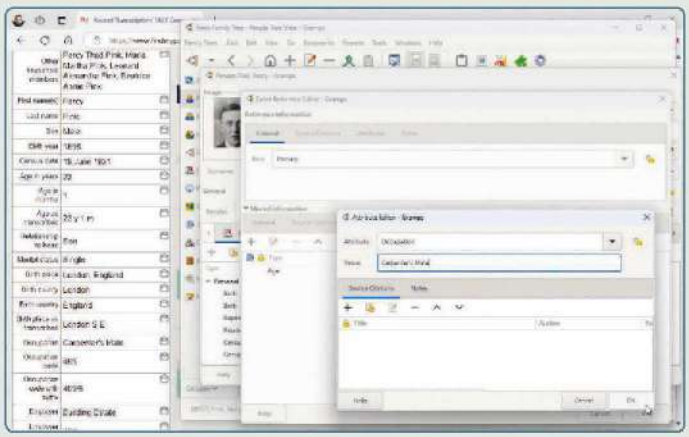
**TOP TIP!**

The help section of the developer's website includes informative videos plus a full list of supported repositories: **ora-extension.com/en/contents.htm**.

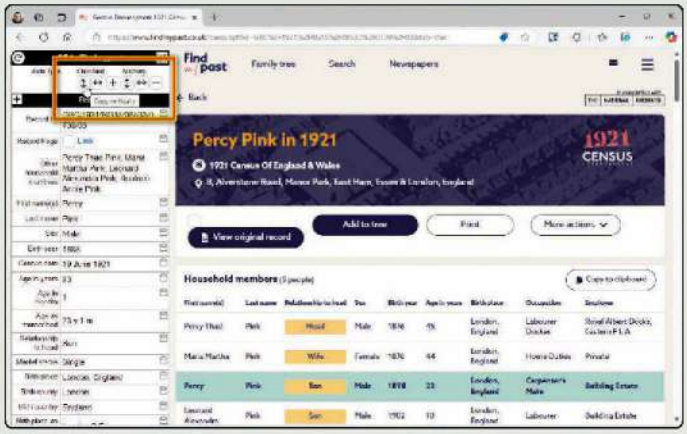
**1 Set Up The Program** After purchasing your subscription to the ORA, you'll receive an email containing your serial number and links to both the main ORAHost program and instructions for installing both it and the extension in your chosen browser. Follow these to get the program set up and registered.



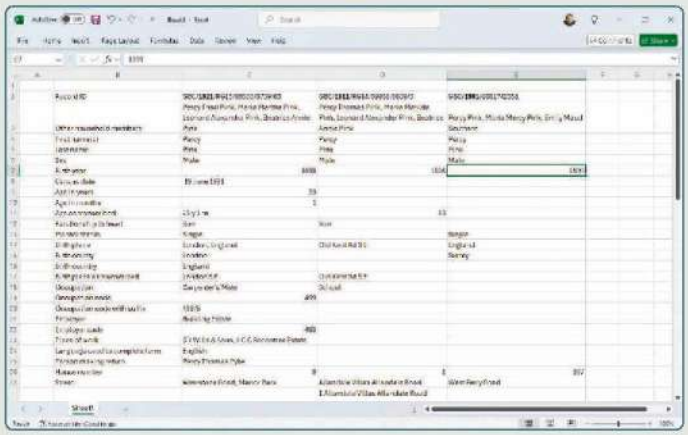

**2 Access The Control Panel** Once set up, visit one of the supported websites like Ancestry or Findmypast. When you view a record, the ORA Control Panel should be available in the top-left-hand corner. Click the Expand button to see the record's contents replicated in a two-column layout.



**3 Copy And Paste Data** If you open your family history software and create a new event or source citation, you can copy and paste each value into the relevant part of the program. Click the clipboard icon next to a value to copy it, switch to the corresponding field in your program then press Ctrl + V to paste it.

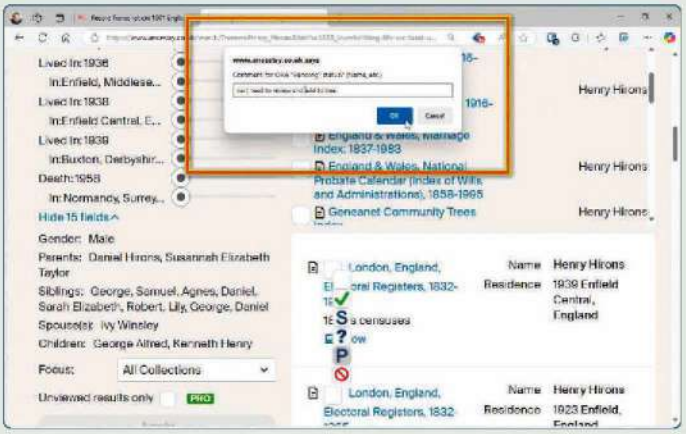



**4 Duplicate Whole Records** You can also copy and paste the entire record into a spreadsheet such as Excel. You'll see vertical and horizontal buttons beneath 'Clipboard' at the top. These copy the two columns – Label and Value – either vertically (Label and Value as columns) or horizontally (Label and Value as rows).

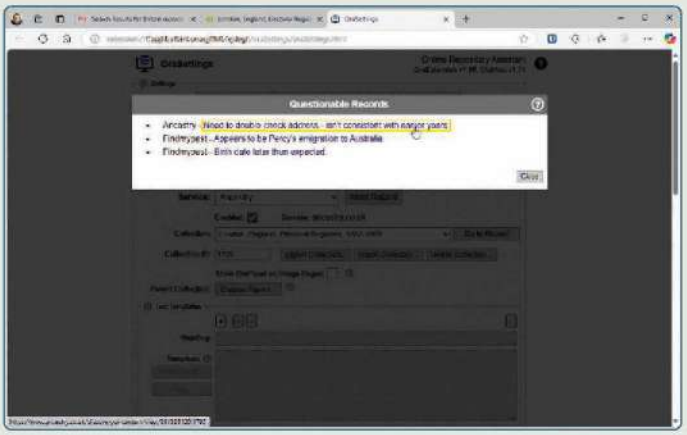


**5 Compare Records Side-By-Side** The 'Memory' button to the right of 'Clipboard' lets you copy multiple records: after copying your first record, navigate to another on the site and click + to add it to the memory. Repeat as necessary, then switch to Excel and press Ctrl + V to paste them all in to compare the records side-by-side.

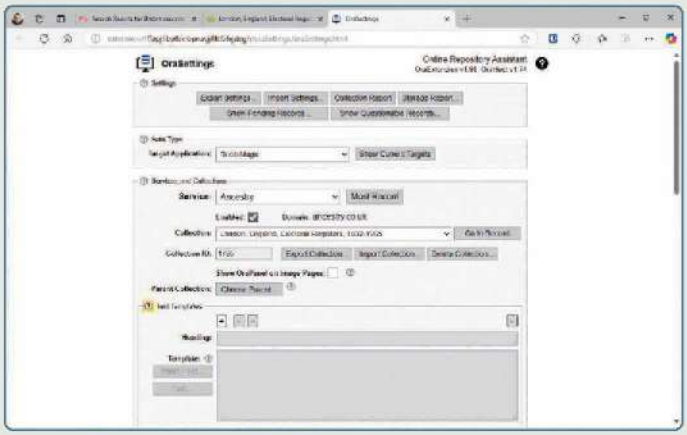
**6 Track Your Research** Another feature offered by the ORA is a handy check box next to every record. These allow you to assign one of several statuses to a record: green tick (confirmed), S (skipped), question mark (questionable), P (pending) or crossed-out entry (doesn't apply). Just click each check box to set its status.




**7 Add A Note** If you mark a note questionable or pending, you'll be prompted to enter an optional comment for future reference. Click 'OK' when done. Going forward, the status box will appear next to the record wherever it appears on the site, making it easy to track (click the box again to change its status).




**8 Review The Records** To access a list of pending/questionable records, click the ORA icon in the browser toolbar (it may be behind a jigsaw icon) to open the 'ORASettings' tab. Clicking the 'Show Pending Records…' or 'Show Questionable Records…' buttons reveals a list with your comments and a clickable link to each record.




**9 Dig Deeper Into The ORA** The 'Settings' dialog is where you can configure other parts of the ORA, including its Auto Type feature. The template library (**ora-extension.com/en/template-library-imports.htm**) is sparse, but there are some available for those who use Family Historian with the Ancestral Sources add-on.

# Stepping Out of the Darkness

**Caroline Roberts** reveals how blind campaigners overcame adversity to fight for accessibility and inclusion in the 19th and early 20th centuries

A geography lesson at Elm Court Residential School for Elder Blind Girls, West Norwood, Lambeth, South London, 1908

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Henry Fawcett was one of the most eminent statesmen of the Victorian age. The professor of political economy at the University of Cambridge was elected to Parliament in 1865 and went on to become postmaster general, introducing such innovations as postal orders, the parcel post and savings stamps. What's most remarkable is that he achieved all of this as a blind man.

Fawcett was one of relatively few blind and visually impaired people of the time who, bolstered by wealth and education, were able to use their talents to the full and make their mark on society. The vast majority were not so fortunate, and those of limited means who lacked the support of family were in danger of ending up in the workhouse or begging on the streets. But attitudes to disability in general were beginning to change, and blind campaigners were at the vanguard of this cultural shift.

The 1851 census, the first to record disabilities, suggests that about one Briton in every thousand were blind. This is fewer than those registered blind today, and it seems likely that the real figure was much higher. Ophthalmology was a relatively new medical specialism, and diseases that can cause blindness, such as smallpox, measles and scarlet fever, were rife. What's more, the century had begun with an epidemic of blinding 'Egyptian ophthalmia', now known to have been infectious trachoma, spread by soldiers returning from the Napoleonic Wars.

Attitudes to blind people in the 19th century were complex. Along with a common belief that physical afflictions were a form of divine judgement, there was compassion and a moral duty to help the less fortunate, and Victorian times saw a huge growth in philanthropy. In the absence of state aid, schools and occupational-training institutions for the blind began to be established and by the late 19th century there were more than 30 charities and least 50 such schools around the country.

## Training In The Blind Trades

Although children received some academic education, the main aim of most institutions was to teach students the 'blind trades' such as basketweaving, brush-making and piano-tuning. Of course, blind children of the upper classes fared better. Subjects taught at Worcester College for the Blind Sons of Gentlemen included chemistry, astronomy and languages, and the composer Edward Elgar even taught violin.

Many schools and institutions drew criticism from blind campaigners and their supporters. It was almost impossible for blind people to make a living using the skills they had acquired, and those employed in the workshops attached to some schools were often paid a pittance. Also, many schools were residential, isolating students from their families and society in general.

The absence of a standardised system for reading by touch was also a significant barrier to education. Braille, which uses combinations of six raised dots to represent letters of the alphabet, had been invented by blind Frenchman Louis Braille in 1824. However, it wasn't universally adopted in Britain until the 1890s.

Throughout much of the century, multiple systems coexisted leading to confusion and competition between publishers. The most common method was to print whole books with each letter embossed for tactile reading. However, these were heavy and expensive to produce, and required extreme concentration that blind readers often found exhausting.

Other methods of reading by touch used symbols representing letters and whole words. But the idea of blind people having access to a special 'code' of their own met with some resistance, with many sighted people favouring the embossed Roman alphabet as it could also be read by them.

During the second half of the century, campaigners pressed for a universal standard system. Among them was Thomas Rhodes Armitage, a doctor who gave up medicine when his vision failed. In 1868 he founded the British and Foreign Society for Improving the Embossed Literature of the Blind, and set up a committee of

One of the nurses at St Dunstan's Hostel for Blind Soldiers and Sailors in Regent's Park, Central London, c1916

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## Elizabeth Gilbert 1826–1885

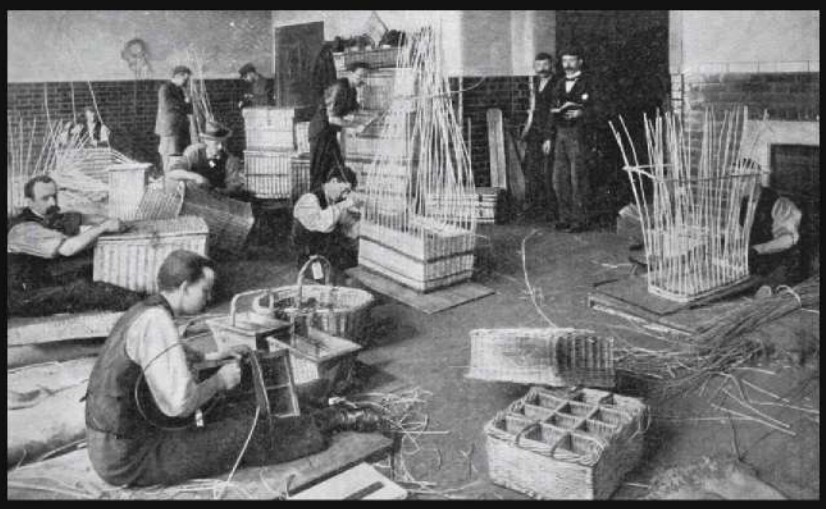
**Gilbert set up a charity that helped blind people earn a living for over 160 years**

The daughter of a University of Oxford academic, Gilbert was blinded by scarlet fever aged three but was educated alongside her sisters. She later became one of the very few women prominent in the blind-welfare movement.

Gilbert was more in tune with the needs of blind people than many other benefactors of the time and recognised the particular challenges faced by those who had lost their sight in adulthood, often with a family to support. It was almost impossible for them to earn a living in the poorly paid 'blind trades', even with training.

Independently wealthy following a bequest from a godparent, in 1854 she established the Association for Promoting the General Welfare of the Blind, a charitable organisation providing vocational training and employment for both men and women. It started with a small basketweaving workshop with just seven employees, but by 1893 was running a factory on Tottenham Court Road in Central London manufacturing a wide range of household products, some of them used by its royal patrons.

The organisation survived to perform its vital work until 2020, by which time it was called Clarity and employed blind people and those with other disabilities in the manufacture of soaps, toiletries and cleaning products.



Basketweaving at the Association for Promoting the General Welfare of the Blind's factory in Tottenham Court Road, Central London, c1901. The charity was founded by Elizabeth Gilbert

blind readers who knew at least three different systems of raised print; as he later wrote, "It is self-evident that the proper persons to decide upon the best methods of instruction by touch, are those who have to rely upon this sense, viz. the blind themselves." They concluded that Braille was the most efficient method. The society is today known as the Royal National Institute of Blind People (**rnib.org.uk**), the foremost sight charity in the UK and Europe's largest producer of Braille texts.

The invention of Braille in 1824 revolutionised the lives of the blind

## The Demand For State Aid

By the close of the century, there was growing pressure for state aid to replace reliance on charity. The National League of the Blind, an advocacy group for blind workers, was founded in the 1890s and affiliated with the Trade Union Congress in 1902. In the years that followed, the cause was taken up by MPs. On 17 February 1914 Labour MP Philip Snowden asked the prime minister during a debate in the Commons if "in view of the fact that there are 5,000 blind people in the workhouses, 5,000 in receipt of parish relief, 7,000 begging their bread in the streets, and 3,000 employed in institutions whose average wages are less than 10s per week… he [would] consider the need for an inquiry into the condition of the blind with the object of devising some scheme of national assistance".

A government committee found that there was urgent need for action, but plans were derailed by the outbreak of the First World War. During the conflict, public sympathy for the blind was fuelled by mustard-gas attacks that caused eye damage often resulting in temporary or permanent blindness. By the end of the conflict more than 1,800 servicemen had lost their sight.

In 1915, Sir Arthur Pearson, a newspaper magnate, publisher and philanthropist who had become blind due to glaucoma, established the charity St Dunstan's Hostel for Blind Soldiers and Sailors. Based in London's Regent's Park, it provided rehabilitation, instruction in Braille and skills including typing, piano-tuning and joinery, and help to find jobs. The servicemen also took part in activities like swimming, boxing, dancing, cycling and rowing. In *Victory Over Blindness* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1919), Pearson's book on the charity, he wrote,

GETTY IMAGES

Nikolai Liakhoff, who helped develop the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association's training programme, at work in Wallasey, Cheshire, 1934

"To the blinded man there is joy in being out on the water, pleasure in the exercise, pleasure in handling the oars, pleasure in the sense of movement, pleasure in the sounds that are full of pictorial suggestion."

Evidently, there was also pleasure in the "little army of girls living in all parts of London" who "regularly got up very early and came to steer the St Dunstan's boats before going on to the shops and offices where they worked". Romances blossomed, and more than one serviceman found a wife among the "fair coxwains".

The organisation still helps men and women as Blind Veterans UK (**blindveterans.org.uk**).

## Man's Best Friend

The gas attacks also gave impetus to another movement that has transformed the lives of generations of blind people: the use of guide dogs. There had been earlier attempts to use dogs to support the blind, but the plight of blinded German soldiers gave rise to a training programme that spread internationally.

In the UK, it was taken up by two Liverpudlians, Muriel Crooke and Rosamund Bond, who established the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (**guidedogs.org.uk**) in 1931. The charity is now the world's largest breeder and trainer of guide dogs.

When the conflict ended, campaigners increased their efforts to secure state assistance. In April 1920, the National League for the Blind organised the Blind March, in which 250 blind men marched to London from Newport, Manchester and Leeds carrying only their white canes and banners bearing the league's slogan "Social justice not charity". They marched for 20 days, arm in arm, using a rope to keep them together, or accompanied by sighted guides. Some 10,000 people were waiting for them when they reached Trafalgar Square.

The march proved to be the tipping point, and the leaders secured a meeting with the prime minister David Lloyd George. The resulting 1920 Blind Persons Act provided a pension from the age of 50, required local councils to provide for the welfare and employment of blind people with workshops and homes, and regulated blind charities. This proved to be the forerunner of a wide range of legislation over the years that has improved the lot of people living with disabilities of all kinds, and we have the blind campaigners of the past to thank for setting us on that path.

**CAROLINE ROBERTS** is a writer based in London. Learn more about her work at **caroline roberts.co.uk**

# Resources

**Take your research further**

**ARCHIVE**

### RNIB ARCHIVE

a **RNIB Heritage Services, Grimaldi Building, 154a Pentonville Road, London N1 9JE**
t 0303 123 9999
e *heritageservices@rnib.org.uk*
w **tinyurl.com/rnib-archive**

The archive's material represents the history and culture of blind and partially sighted people in the UK over the past 150 years and beyond. Booking is essential.

**BOOKS**

*In the Mind's Eye: The Blinded Veterans of St Dunstan's*
**David Castleton**
*Pen & Sword, 2014*
Read the stories of the men and women who lost their sight in the service of their country, and how St Dunstan's (now Blind Veterans UK) helped them rejoin society.

*The Blind Victorian: Henry Fawcett and British Liberalism*
**Lawrence Goldman**
*Cambridge University Press, 2003*
This exploration of the politician's life and career includes his influence on Victorian culture.

**PODCAST**

### BLINDNESS IN VICTORIAN BRITAIN

w **media.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php/blindness-victorian-britain/**

Academic Heather Tilley traces how blind and visually impaired people in the Victorian era increasingly sought control over the issues that affected them.

**VIDEO**

### LIFE UNSEEN: WHY THE HISTORY OF BLINDNESS MATTERS

w **tinyurl.com/yt-selina**

Blind broadcaster and author Selina Mills takes us on a journey through the lives and stories of blind people from history.

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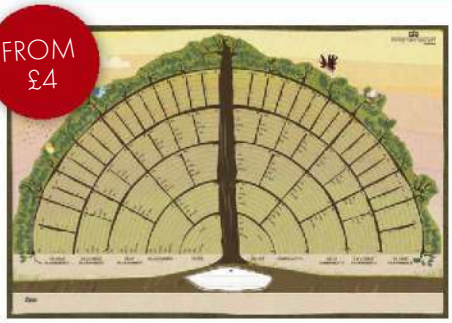

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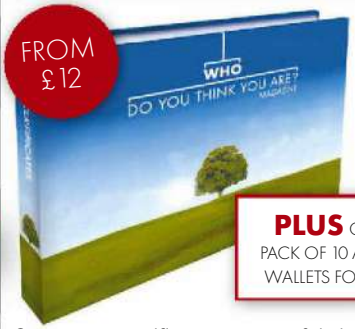


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# 'William's Throat Was Cut In A Case Of Mistaken Identity'

Celebrating Your Discoveries

Frederick Hillberg was astonished to discover that one of his Victorian ancestors was the victim of a horrific attack. He explains his findings to **Gail Dixon**

Market days in the Shropshire town of Ludlow usually attracted a crowd, and 20 August 1840 was no exception. The Angel Inn was fully booked with guests, including William Miller Mackreth – an accountant by profession who had several business interests. He retired to his room at 11pm, and locked the door. Unbeknownst to him, an assassin was hiding under the bed.

William Mackreth was born in Bristol in 1811, and was my great great grandfather. I knew nothing about his life or the terrible peril he faced until I began researching our family history.

My brother Robert discovered William's brush with death when he read a heavily illustrated blog entry by Richard Tisdale about the crime at the British Newspaper Archive (**blog.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/2017/12/08/richard-tisdale-attempted-murder/**). It was a fascinating tale, so I followed it up.

**FREDERICK HILLBERG** lives in Bradley Stoke, South Gloucestershire, and has worked mainly in the construction industry. He has been researching his family history for four years

I found William's will, dated 1863, at Bristol Archives (**bristolmuseums.org.uk/bristol-archives/**), and it proved to be extraordinary. Wills normally contain bequests, but this one also confirmed that my forebear had indeed been the victim of a murderous assault.

Among the bequests, William left an item called "the Ludlow Box" to his son William Henry Mackreth. The will stated that the box contained a model of the Angel Inn and articles relating to "the attack made upon my life at Ludlow".

Naturally I found this very intriguing, so my wife Maureen and I decided to visit the town. Not knowing where to start, we headed to Ludlow Visitor Information Centre (**ludlow.org.uk**) where the assistants already knew about the story.

They recommended a book called *Foul Deeds and Suspicious Deaths in Shrewsbury and Around Shropshire* by David J Cox (Wharncliffe Books, 2008), which described the crime, so I bought a copy.

We also visited Ludlow Library (**next.shropshire.gov.uk/libraries/find-a-library/ludlow-library/**) where we met two ladies who research the town. William worked for a lead manufacturer and they told us that lead was mined near Ludlow, which could explain his stay.

## Investigating Past Felonies

If your relation was the victim of a crime, or fell foul of the law, try these three websites

### Ancestry

w **ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/1590**

Here you can discover individuals charged with a crime, their trial and sentence (if they were convicted). Their age, birthplace and date of release may also be included.

### Old Bailey

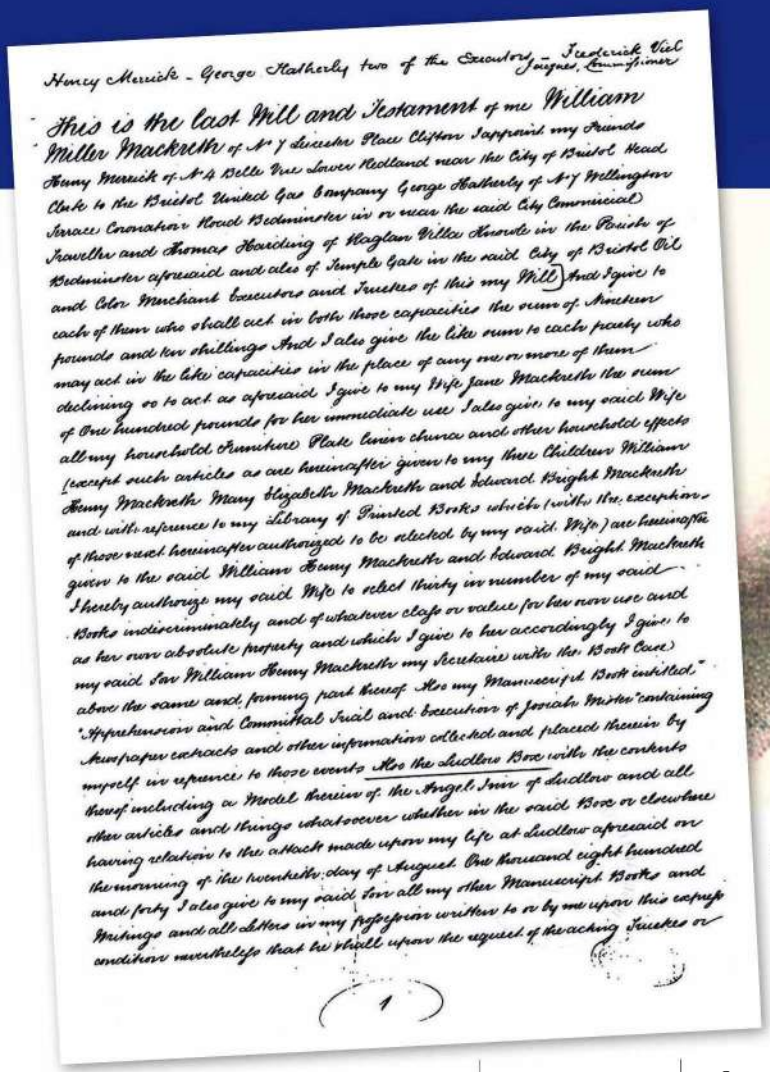
w **oldbaileyonline.org**

Details of almost 198,000 trials at London's central criminal court (1674–1913) are online. The testimony of witnesses, defendants and barristers provides fascinating insight.

### Our Criminal Ancestors

w **ourcriminalancestors.org**

This intriguing site focuses on crime at a local level. The case studies include John Henry Gooding, a forger who in 1919 became a spy for the British security services in Ireland.

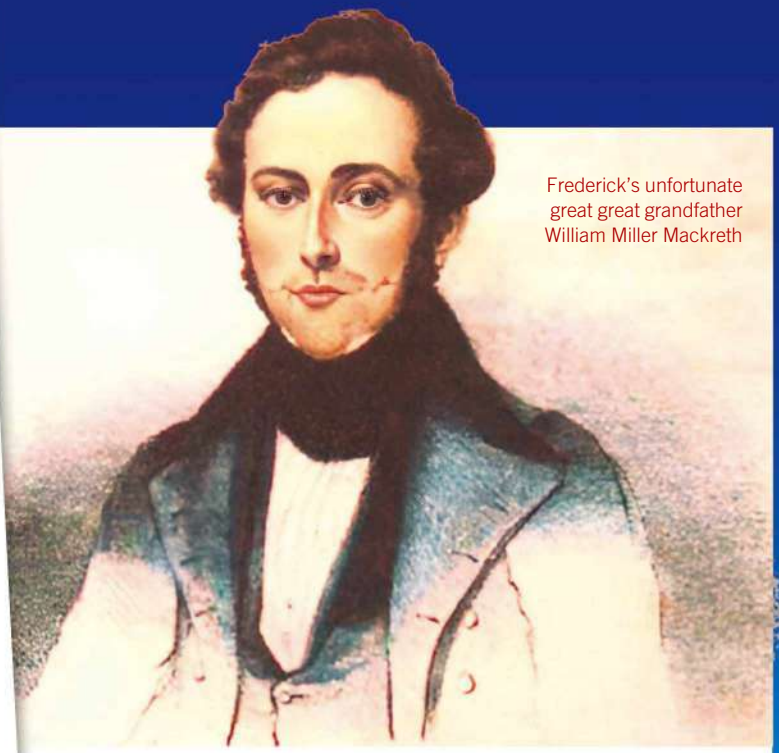


Henry Merrick - George Hatherly two of the Executors - Frederick Vick Jurgues, Accountant

This is the last Will and Testament of me William Miller Mackreth of No 7 Leicester Place Clifton Square my Friends Henry Merrick of No 4 Belle Vue Lower Redland near the City of Bristol Head Clerk to the Bristol United Gas Company George Hatherly of No 7 Wellington Terrace Coronation Road Bedminster in or near the said City Commercial Traveller and Thomas Harding of Hoglan Villa Knowle in the Parish of Bedminster aforesaid and also of Temple Gate in the said City of Bristol Oil and Color Merchant Executors and Trustees of this my Will And I give to each of them who shall act in both those capacities the sum of Ninteen pounds and ten shillings And I also give the like sum to each person who may act in the like capacities in the place of any one or more of them declining so to act as aforesaid I give to my Wife Jane Mackreth the sum of One hundred pounds for her immediate use I also give to my said Wife all my household Furniture Plate Linen China and other household effects (except such articles as are hereinafter given to my three Children William Henry Mackreth Mary Elizabeth Mackreth and Edward Bright Mackreth and with reference to my Library of Printed Books which (with the exception of those next hereinafter authorized to be selected by my said Wife) are hereinafter given to the said William Henry Mackreth and Edward Bright Mackreth I hereby authorize my said Wife to select thirty in number of my said Books indiscriminately and of whatever class or value for her own use and as her own absolute property and which I give to her accordingly I give to my said Son William Henry Mackreth my Secretaire (with the Book Case) above the same and forming part thereof Also my Manuscript Book intitled "Apprehension and Committal Trial and Execution of Josiah Mister" containing Newspaper extracts and other information collected and placed therein by myself in reference to those events Also the Ludlow Box with the contents thereof including a Model therein of the Angel Inn of Ludlow and all other articles and things whatsoever whether in the said Box or elsewhere having relation to the attack made upon my life at Ludlow aforesaid on the morning of the twentieth day of August One thousand eight hundred and forty I also give to my said Son all my other Manuscript Books and Writings and all others in my possession written by or by me upon this copy hereof nevertheless that he shall upon the request of the acting Trustees or Executors

1

Frederick found a copy of William's will at Bristol Archives, which mentions "the Ludlow Box" related to the attack



Frederick's unfortunate great great grandfather William Miller Mackreth

Finally, we visited the Angel Inn itself, the location where the drama had taken place.

## My Eureka Moment

The book and newspaper articles together revealed the astonishing story behind the attack. William woke at 4am to find something at his throat, and pushed his attacker away. He leapt out of bed, broke panes of glass in the window and tried to call for help. Blood was everywhere.

He was found on the stairs by the landlord, who at first assumed that he'd attempted suicide. Two surgeons named Hodges and Crawford happened to be staying at the inn with their assistants, and a local physician was also called. There was a five-inch cut to William's throat, a slash across his face and part of his tongue was missing. A pattern of blood spatters led from William's room, number 17, to room 20.

Amid the furore, all of the guests at the inn got out of bed and crowded the landing. Only one person stayed behind in his own room – a young man named Josiah Mister, who was in room 20. The police were summoned, and found a bloody razor in the inn's courtyard.

William was able to whisper to the police that he'd been attacked. Remarkably, he recovered from his wounds but was scarred for life.

Suspicion soon fell on Mister. There were spots of blood on the curtain in his room, plus marks in the dust under William's bed which suggested that the attacker had waited there until my great great grandfather fell asleep.

Mister was charged with inflicting wounds with intent to murder, and awaited trial at Shrewsbury Gaol. The case captivated the Victorians, and hit the headlines across both Britain and its colonies.

## My Breakthrough

Why did Mister try to kill William? Further research led to the amazing discovery that he didn't intend to kill him at all – it was a case of mistaken identity.

Mister had stalked a cattle dealer from Birmingham called Sydney Ludlow, who was known to carry a large amount of gold to markets. Mister had even enquired at the Angel Inn whether the dealer would be staying the night. Mr Ludlow usually stayed in room 17, where William slept. However, on this occasion he had to change to another room because the inn was so busy.

Mister pleaded not guilty, but he was convicted and sentenced to death. Despite a petition calling for his sentence to be commuted – which William himself signed – he was executed outside the gaol on 3 April 1841. The case proved to be a landmark in legal history, because Mister was the last person in Britain to be executed for attempted murder.

After accumulating so much historical information, I was encouraged by Robert to write a novel based on William's life. It's called *The Dangerous Journey* and is a story of mystery, intrigue and romance. I'm incredibly proud to bring this piece of my family history to light.

### HAVE YOU BROKEN THROUGH A BRICK WALL?

**Share your family story with us and you could appear in the magazine!**

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*

### Reader Tips

**Here is Frederick's advice for overcoming brick walls**

- Visit the area where an incident in your family history took place to gather local knowledge.
- It's amazing what you can discover at a local record office, and the experts there can help you research old documents.
- Persevere with your ambition.

*The Dangerous Journey* by Frederick Hillberg is available now from Brown Dog Books (RRP £9.99)

Around Britain

# Northern Ireland

**Jonathan Scott** returns to Belfast to see what's new at PRONI

The basalt columns of the Giant's Causeway, near Bushmills in County Antrim

The Anglo-Irish Treaty of 6 December 1921 ended the three-year Irish War of Independence, and established the Irish Free State one year later. This comprised 26 of the 32 counties of Ireland, the remaining six preferring to form Northern Ireland. The period saw unrest between communities of mainly Protestant unionist and Catholic nationalist civilians, and left an indelible mark on Irish genealogy with the destruction of the Public Record Office of Ireland (PROI) building in Dublin in 1922.

While research in Northern Ireland has unique challenges, not least because of the loss of 19th-century census returns thanks to the fire at the PROI (for 1821–1851) and an order from the Dublin government to pulp them (for 1861–1891), it is somewhat offset by civil registration records, parish registers, 20th-century census records and 19th-century census substitutes all being freely available online.

Indeed, the ambitious 'Beyond 2022' digital project has recreated the destroyed building as the Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland (**virtualtreasury.ie**), bringing together copies of lost documents held elsewhere, alongside images of those that survived the fire.

Partners in the project, which was led by Trinity College

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## Free Online Records

Don't miss these property and census records, passenger lists, parish registers and a petition

### Griffith's Valuation

w **askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation/**

The valuation shows 19th-century occupiers and owners of land and buildings across the country. PRONI's guide to valuation records is at **nidirect.gov.uk/articles/about-valuation-revision-books**.

### Passenger Lists

w **tinyurl.com/ulster-ancestry-pass-lists**

Ulster Ancestry has transcribed passenger lists for ships leaving the province for North America, mostly in the 19th century.

### Catholic Parish Registers

w **registers.nli.ie**

This National Library of Ireland site enables you to search parish register microfilms for most Catholic parishes up to 1880.

### Census Records

w **genealogy.nationalarchives.ie**

Here you can access a wide range of material including census records, shipping registers and crew lists, as well as a host of probate records including soldiers' wills.

### Ulster Covenant

w **tinyurl.com/proni-cov**

Search images of the signatures of almost 500,000 men and women who in 1912 signed the Ulster Covenant or Women's Declaration against Home Rule.

Dublin (**tcd.ie**), include the National Archives of Ireland (NAI; **nationalarchives.ie**), The National Archives of the UK (**nationalarchives.gov.uk**), the Irish Manuscripts Commission (**irishmanuscripts.ie**) and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (**nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/public-record-office-northern-ireland-proni**). PRONI has made digital surrogates of records available since 2017, and has created an online gallery (**virtualtreasury.ie/image-galleries/age-of-revolution**) about food riots, protest and political agitation in 1760–1830.

### Cross-Border Research

When researching Northern Irish kin, you will need to draw on material held on both sides of the border – many records from before the formation of Northern Ireland are stored in the Republic of Ireland. PRONI holds records for six of the nine counties within the province of Ulster – Antrim, Armagh, Derry/Londonderry, Down, Fermanagh and Tyrone. It's located in Titanic Boulevard, putting it at the heart of Belfast's industrial heritage as a major port, a global centre for linen, as well as heavy engineering and manufacturing, ropemaking, and of course shipbuilding. Indeed PRONI's holdings include records of the RMS *Titanic* shipbuilders Harland & Wolff, whose massive gantry cranes Goliath and Samson became symbols of the city. Other maritime collections here include crew lists and passenger lists, and you'll find school records, which often include not only a parent's occupation but also the name of the child's previous schools – so you may be able to track the family's movements.

The Irish government's site Irish Genealogy (**irishgenealogy.ie**) has civil birth, marriage and death records for Northern Ireland up to 1921. More recent records can be ordered from the General Register Office for Northern Ireland (**nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/general-register-office-northern-ireland**). Ask About Ireland (**askaboutireland.ie**) offers free access to the most popular 19th-century census substitute – Griffith's Valuation. This recorded the names of occupiers of land and buildings, as well as owners.

The NAI's website is currently going through a major redesign, due for relaunch just as we went to press. Its genealogy portal at **nationalarchives.ie/genealogy/** gives free access to census records for 1901 and 1911, surviving census fragments from 1821–1851, Tithe Applotment Books (1823–1837), marriage-licence indexes and valuation records.

**The NAI's website is currently going through a major redesign**

You can also search through digitised Catholic qualification and convert rolls. In the 18th century, certain anti-Catholic laws were relaxed for those who took the oath of allegiance to the king and renounced their religion for that of the established Church of Ireland, and the rolls are available online at **census.nationalarchives.ie/search/cq/home.jsp**. As the website points out: "In the majority of cases this was not a sincere ▶

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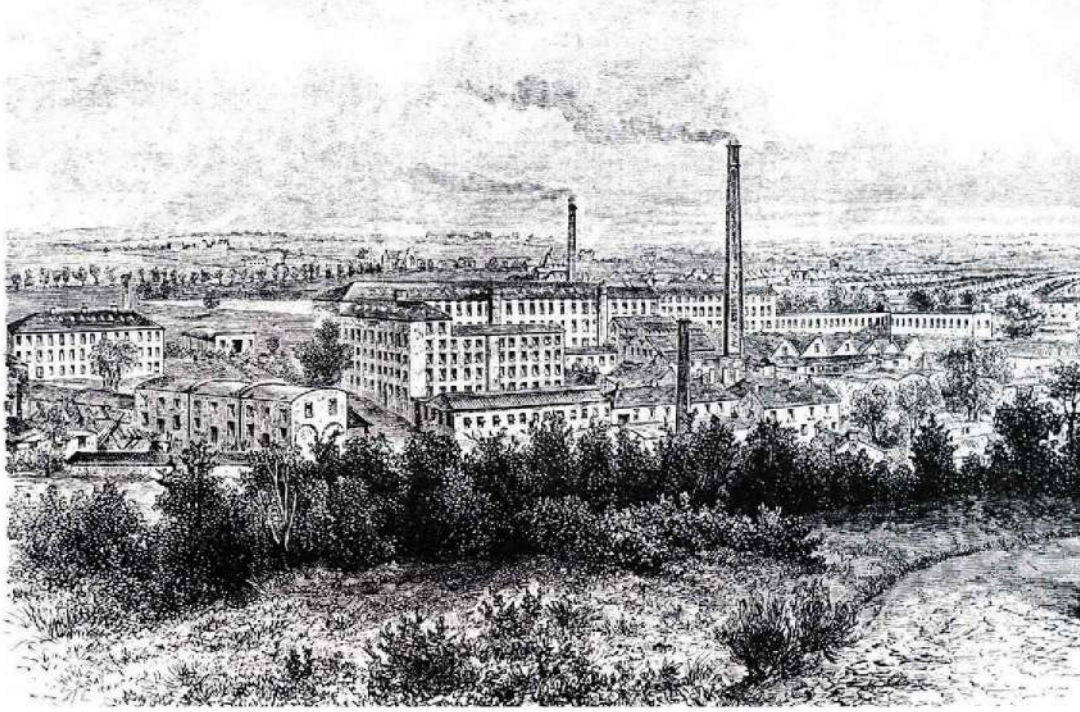
This photo of men at work on the factory floor of the Belfast Ropework Company in Connswater was taken c1910

renunciation of the Catholic religion, as it was the only legal means whereby a Catholic could obtain basic civil rights."

## Searching Probate Material

If you're looking for probate material, **genealogy.nationalarchives.ie** has soldiers' wills from the First World War and Calendars of Wills and Administrations (1858–1922). Meanwhile, will books for the registries of Armagh, Belfast and Londonderry are held by PRONI, which has compiled this database covering 1858–1968: **nidirect.gov.uk/services/search-will-calendars**. You can view the entire calendar entry, and often see digital images of transcribed wills.



The linen mill and model village of Bessbrook in County Armagh

According to PRONI's head of public services Stephen Scarth, new material is regularly being added to its online eCatalogue (**nidirect.gov.uk/services/search-pronis-ecatalogue**). Records from the Old Movilla Cemetery in Newtownards, for example, were added in November last year (referenced as D4686). These were compiled over several years by John Norman McGimpsey, and include graveyard plans, inscriptions, photographs of the gravestones and 1,100 burial plots – the earliest recorded being one William Turner in 1612.

The catalogue has also recently been bolstered by transcriptions of letters (1776–1819) by Dr William Drennan, a physician and founder member of the Society of United Irishmen, and his sister Martha McTier, an advocate for women's health and education, and democratic reform.

During 2025 staff are adding more maps to the PRONI Historical Maps viewer available at **nidirect.gov.uk/services/search-proni-historical-maps-viewer**, as well as a 'Places of Worship' dataset.

In addition PRONI continues to contribute to the long-running 'Conflict Archive on the Internet' project with Ulster University (**https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/cain/**). Here you can search through more than 4,000 public records comprising 17,000 pages of content relating to the Troubles from 1968–2007 – documents from 2000 and 2001 were added in December 2024.

A number of research guides have been updated too, including an alphabetical guide to sporting records (**nidirect.gov.uk/publications/sporting-associations-index**) and one focusing on the textile industry (see the 'Local Industry' box).

There is also a guide to PRONI sources and artefacts from other institutions telling the story of slavery in Ulster, first published in 2007 for the bicentenary of the Act of Parliament that abolished the British slave trade. Last year a much expanded edition launched, with a document written by US abolitionist Frederick Douglass and a foreword from his great great great grandson (**nidirect.gov.uk/publications/ulster-slavery-story-archives**).

There have been recent changes on the ground as well. In April 2024, the Historic Environment Record of Northern Ireland (HERoNI), which is responsible for databases, written records, and maps, photographic, drawn and digital material, relocated to PRONI.

Stephen adds that the archive is now using a new payment system to "streamline the user journey", especially valuable if you can't visit in person. And for those who can, the Search Desk has moved to a better position facing the entrance to the Search Room.

**TOP TIP!**

You can search burials at three Belfast cemeteries and Derry City Cemetery via the councils' websites **tinyurl.com/belfast-city-cem** and **tinyurl.com/derry-strabane-burials** respectively.

### LOCAL INDUSTRY

**Linen** Thousands of Belfast residents made linen – was your ancestor one of them?

Workers at a linen factory in Belfast, photographed c1900

By the end of the 19th century Belfast had become 'Linenopolis', the linen capital of the world, with about 200 companies employing more than 70,000 people. There's a newly updated PRONI guide to researching this topic at **nidirect.gov.uk/publications/ulster-textile-industry-1690-1995**. The PDF includes an alphabetical list of local firms and individuals, each with a description of the kinds of records that have survived. The largest single collection is the Andrews & Co. archive comprising 544 volumes relating to the flax-spinning mill in Comber (you can watch a BBC report on its closure in 1997 at **tinyurl.com/bbc-comb-flax**), as well as Andrews family farms and estates.

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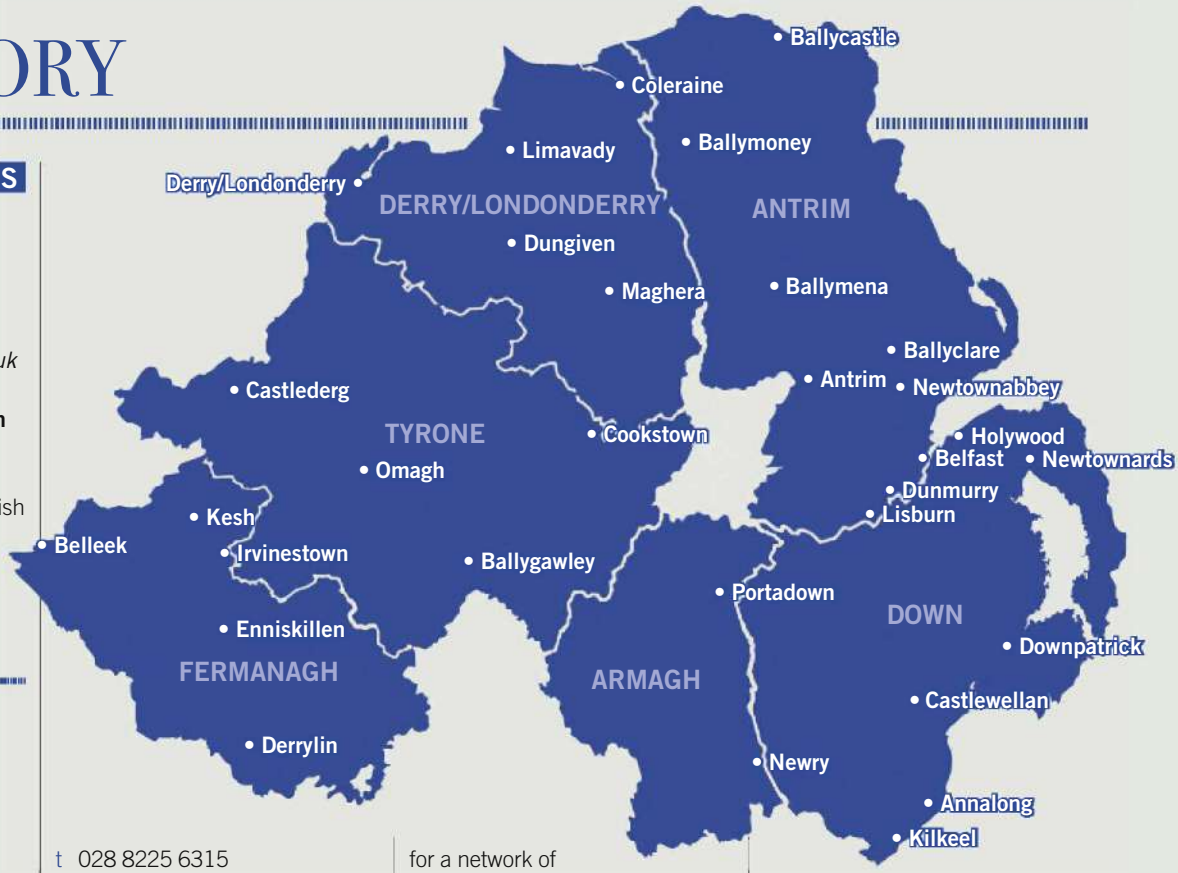
# DIRECTORY




## ARCHIVES & LIBRARIES

### Public Record Office Of Northern Ireland (PRONI)

a **2 Titanic Boulevard, Belfast BT3 9HQ**
t 028 9053 4800
e *proni@communities-ni.gov.uk*
w **nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/public-record-office-northern-ireland-proni**

Key records for genealogists at PRONI include church and parish registers, civil registration material, court and probate records, valuation records, workhouse material, maps and photographic collections.

### Belfast Central Library

a **Royal Avenue, Belfast BT1 1EA**
t 028 9050 9156
e *belfast.heritage@librariesni.org.uk*
w **https://www.librariesni.org.uk/libraries/greater-belfast/belfast-central-library/**

Here you'll find Northern Ireland's library service's largest heritage collection, which includes maps, directories and school registers. There are online exhibitions, a digital film archive and details of the Newspaper Library, which has titles in print and on microfilm back to the 18th century.

### Linen Hall Library

a **17 Donegall Square North, Belfast BT1 5GB**
t 028 9032 1707
e *info@linenhall.com*
w **linenhall.com**

Founded as the Belfast Library and Society for Promoting Knowledge in 1788, the library includes an Irish and Local Studies Collection containing a theatre archive, and a series of printed family histories, alongside memorial inscriptions; army lists; clergy records; school registers; passenger lists; an index of Belfast births, marriages and deaths; and a list of Northern Irish servicemen killed during the First World War.

### Mellon Centre For Migration Studies

a **2 Mellon Road, Omagh BT78 5QU**
t 028 8225 6315
e *mcms@librariesni.org.uk*
w **mellonmigrationcentre.com**

The centre's Irish Emigration Database features documents relating to emigration to the USA and Canada between 1700 and 1950. Much of the material is freely available at **https://www.dippam.ac.uk/ied**.

### National Archives Of Ireland

a **Bishop Street, Dublin 8, D08 DF85**
t 01 407 2300
e *mail@nationalarchives.ie*
w **nationalarchives.ie**

NAI holds important Ireland-wide resources such as valuation records, probate material and surviving census records.

### National Library Of Ireland

a **7/8 Kildare Street, Dublin 2, D02 P638**
t 01 603 0200
e *info@nli.ie*
w **nli.ie**

The library has a variety of genealogical resources, but perhaps the highlight is the free Catholic parish registers available online at **registers.nli.ie**.

## GROUPS & SOCIETIES

### Irish Family History Foundation

w **rootsireland.ie/map/**

This is the coordinating body for a network of genealogical groups and research centres across Ireland – click the map to explore what's available for each county.

### North Of Ireland Family History Society

w **nifhs.org**

The society runs nine branches, plus a well-stocked research centre in Newtownabbey.

### Presbyterian Historical Society Of Ireland

w **presbyterianhistoryireland.com**

The society's research centre in Belfast includes congregational church records.

### Ulster Historical Foundation

w **ancestryireland.com**

This non-profit body focuses on Irish and Scots-Irish ancestors in the province of Ulster. Members-only databases include Roman Catholic registers for the counties Antrim and Down, as well as a large number of Protestant (especially Church of Ireland) registers. Free-to-view records at **tinyurl.com/uhf-data-free** include a report on the distribution of surnames in Ireland (1890).

## MUSEUMS

### National Museums NI

a **Cultra, Holywood BT18 0EU**
t 028 9042 8428
e *info@nationalmuseumsni.org*
w **nationalmuseumsni.org**

The heritage body manages four museums in Northern Ireland – the Ulster Museum, Ulster Folk Museum, Ulster Transport Museum and Ulster American Folk Park. If you want to find out about the library, sound archive and other material you can explore the website Collections Online (**nationalmuseumsni.org/collections**).

### Titanic Belfast

a **1 Olympic Way, Queen's Road, Titanic Quarter, Belfast BT3 9EP**
t 028 9076 6386
w **titanicbelfast.com**

Learn more about the city's shipbuilding history, including the world-famous ship.

## WEBSITES

### Irish War Memorials

w **irishwarmemorials.ie**

Here you can search 1,513 memorials by name, regiment/service, conflict or location.

### Virtual Treasury Of Ireland

w **virtualtreasury.ie**

This site recreates material from the Public Record Office of Ireland, which was destroyed in June 1922, in searchable form.

# A psychiatrist's manuscript, 1950

**Francis Maunze** of the Royal College of Psychiatrists reveals what a book of table-mat designs tells us about the evolution of the profession Interview By Rosemary Collins

Many of us have an ancestor who was mentally ill at some time in their life. In the past, such conditions were poorly understood and sufferers were often imprisoned for many months or even years in a lunatic asylum. In the 19th century, the medical profession began treating mental illness more humanely and intelligently. The Royal College of Psychiatrists was founded in 1841 as the Association of Medical Officers of Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane. Francis Maunze, the college's archivist and records manager, explains how a manuscript of unusual table-mat designs reveals the changing nature of mental-health treatment.

## Can You Describe The Document?

*Gaskell Club: Table Mats of the Famous Insane* is a largely handwritten manuscript by Dr Isabel Wilson. It comprises accounts of the table mats she designed and donated to the Royal Medico-Psychological Association, the former name of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, in 1950 for the use of the Gaskell Club at their annual evening dinners – all of the club's members had won the Gaskell Medal, one of the foremost academic distinctions in clinical psychiatry, and met up once a year. The manuscript records that it was Dr Elizabeth Casson who proposed the formation of the club, and that at that time there were only three women who had won the medal: Dr Casson herself, Dr Muriel Northcote, and Dr Mary Barkas who lived in New Zealand.

In the manuscript Dr Wilson tells the story of her association with the club. She was a professional psychiatrist who already knew some of the members, and her father Dr George R Wilson had been awarded the Gaskell Medal in 1892. She attended the annual dinners as a guest, and at the invitation of Dr Casson. Dr Wilson goes on to say that she enjoyed attending these meetings, and as a gesture of appreciation decided to make hand-painted table mats for the club. She also reveals that she decided on the theme of 'Famous Insane' for the plate mats and 'Causes and Cures' for the wine-glass mats.

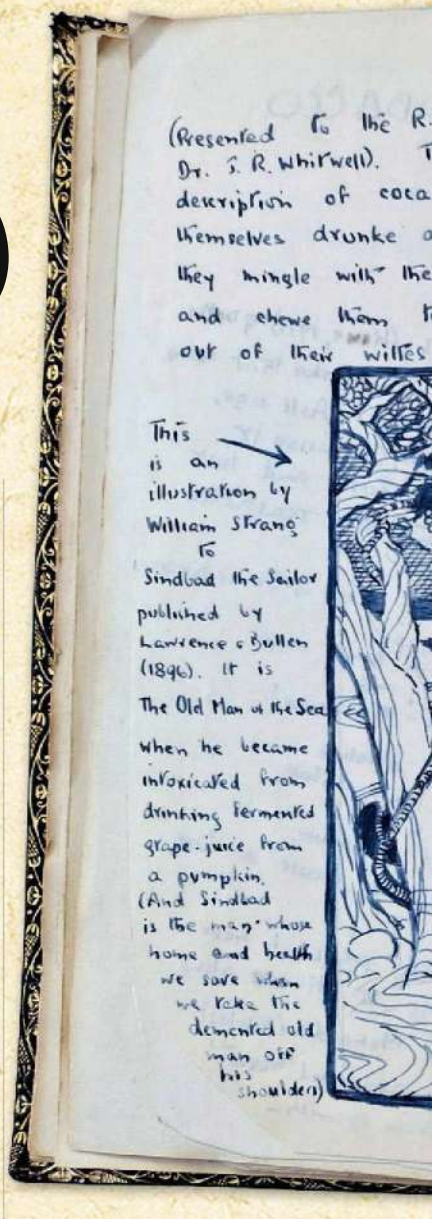
The manuscript contains pages with descriptions of designs, references and stories of individual mats. The 'Famous Insane' include mythological and fictional figures such as Bes (an Egyptian god) and Shakespeare's King Lear, and real people such as George III and Vincent van Gogh. The design of the manuscript is unique in that some of its pages were cut on the edges so that when two pages are opened flat out, they resemble a table mat.

**The manuscript highlights the long-forgotten history of the Gaskell Club**

## Why Did You Choose It As Your Gem?

Our archives mainly comprise administrative records of the college and its predecessor bodies. As such the collection is very much deficient in material such as manuscripts, personal papers, and oral-history records and transcripts that showcase social history and the ordinary person's side of the story. This manuscript is a gem because it features both the official history of the association and the personal stories of Dr Wilson and Dr Samuel Gaskell (1807–1886). Dr Gaskell was the medical superintendent of the Lancashire County Asylum in Lancaster, and later a national medical commissioner in lunacy. The prize was set up in his name the year after his death.

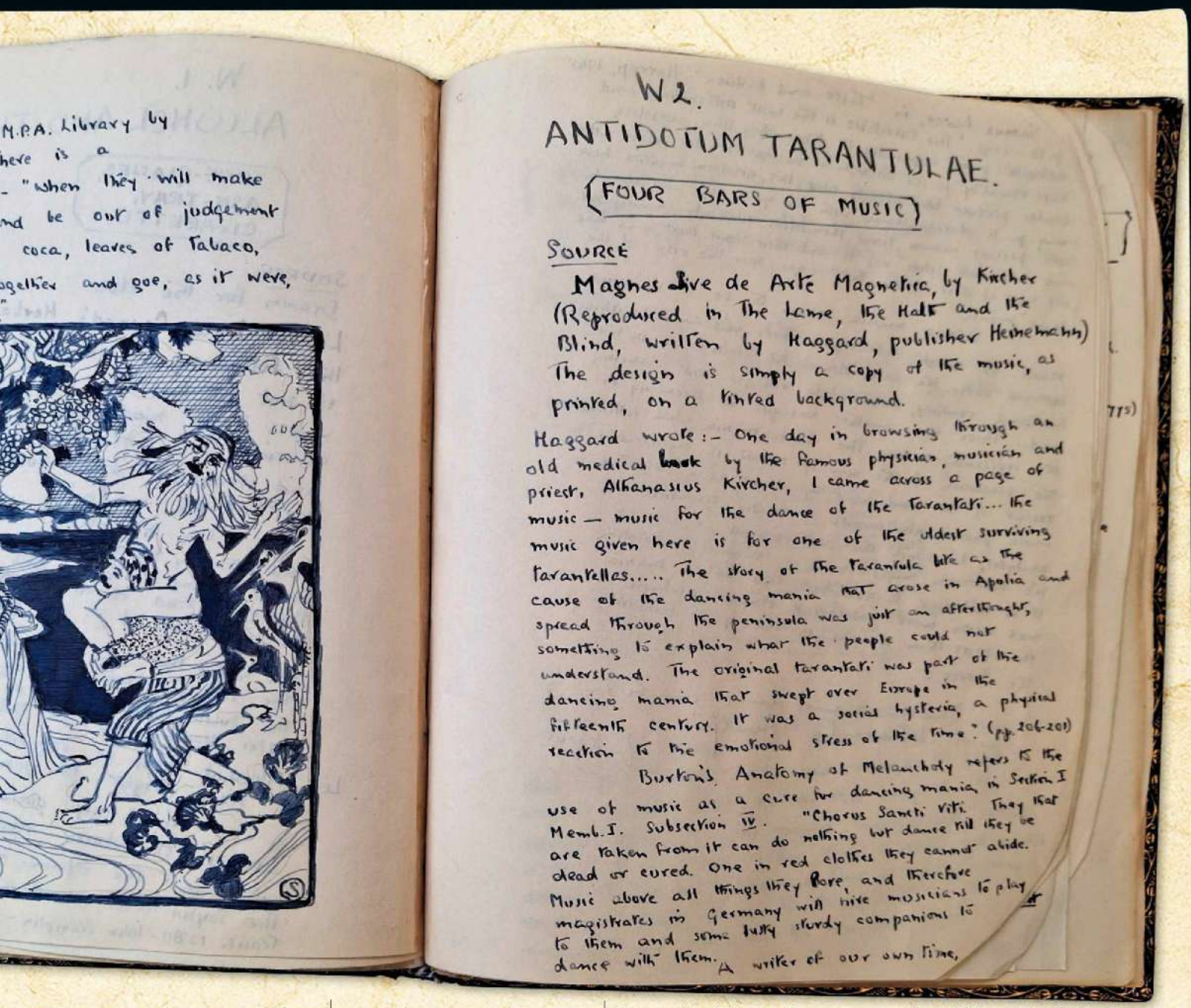
The manuscript highlights the long-forgotten history of the club, which is no longer in existence. It also features the participation of




## Visit Us

Royal College Of Psychiatrists Archives
a 21 Prescot Street, London E1 8BB
t 020 8618 4096
e *archives@rcpsych.ac.uk*
w **www.rcpsych.ac.uk/about-us/library-and-archives/archives**

The archive is open by appointment Monday to Friday 9am–4.30pm, excluding bank holidays.




women in the activities of an organisation that previously segregated them from joining as members. Dr Wilson actually rose to become president of the association in 1962, while Drs Casson and Barkas also distinguished themselves as trailblazers in the provision of mental-health services in Britain and beyond. Dr Barkas, who was born in 1889 in New Zealand, was the first female doctor employed at the Bethlem Royal Hospital in Bromley, and later became one of the first senior doctors at the Maudsley Hospital in Camberwell when it opened to civilians – it was originally set up as a military hospital.

Dr Barkas was also the medical superintendent at the Lawn Hospital in Lincoln between 1927 and 1932, after which she moved back to New Zealand.

## What Does The Manuscript Tell Us About The Association?

At the time it was written recreational and occupational therapy, alongside drugs such as antipsychotics and antidepressants, were being introduced as treatment for mental illness, and the manuscript contains illustrations that show the use of occupational therapy by psychiatrists. One of the images depicts Dorset House in Bristol, the first School of Occupational Therapy, founded in 1930 by Dr Elizabeth Casson. However, some of the more unusual cures that are featured include 'Music', 'Gardening' and 'Exorcism'.

Unfortunately, it is believed that the mats themselves were lost when Natalie Cobbing, secretary of the association and society from 1958 until her death in 1984, hid them under the floorboards of its home at the time 17 Belgrave Square during a refurbishment, because the drawings were seen as badly done and in poor taste.

## What Other Material Does The College Hold?

Our archives consist of documents relating to the college's history, including its predecessor organisations, going back to 1841. We also hold papers from, and about, individual members; antiquarian books on the history of psychiatry; plus administrative documents of the council, board of trustees, committees, faculties and divisions, and membership records. We also hold a number of manuscripts and a small collection of photographs, portraits, paintings, artefacts, and transcripts of oral-history recordings, as well as mental-nurse training records, a limited collection of records from asylums and mental hospitals, and some clinical documentation.

# REVIEWS

The latest books on history and genealogy, plus apps, podcasts and websites

THE HOLOCAUST

## Two Sisters Betrayal, Love And Resistance In Wartime France

**Rosie Whitehouse**
*Hurst, 256 pages, £22*

Marion Müller and her mother Edith in Berlin, 1921

This photo of Huguette Müller was taken c1935

The plight – and resistance – of foreign-born Jews in France during the Holocaust is a subject often overshadowed by that of Germany and the rest of Europe, something which Rosie Whitehouse sets out to remedy in her latest book, *Two Sisters*.

The siblings in question are Marion and Huguette Müller, the mother and aunt of Rosie's husband, who were born in Berlin but moved to France to escape Nazi persecution after Hitler came to power in 1933. The book describes Whitehouse's quest to search for the family of Dr Pétri, to whom Huguette owes her life, and to have the brave doctor recognised as a Righteous Among the Nations: a Gentile who risked his life to save Jewish people.

Whitehouse chronicles the research needed to tell this haunting story, which she was able to carry out in a relatively short time – perhaps because she was not searching for her own family history but that of her in-laws, and therefore the degree of separation made it a slightly less haunting task.

The author outlines parallels with modern-day French politics, and the shocking reality that the lessons of the Holocaust have not been learnt, and not enough has changed since that dark time.

My mother and her sister were also victims of the Nazis in occupied France – my aunt was murdered at Auschwitz aged six, while my mother survived hidden by nuns. Those who are lucky enough to not have such a brutal family history will be fascinated by this grim story of the collaboration of the French with the Nazis during the Second World War, and the incredible heroism displayed by ordinary people.

**Debra Barnes is the author of *The Young Survivors* (Duckworth, 2020) and works for the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR). You can read an interview about her tree at tinyurl.com/wdytya-barnes**

TIM JUDAH

## DIGITAL PICKS

Rosemary Collins highlights three digital resources that caught our eye this month

LISTEN

### Vincent Van Gogh In Brixton

**tinyurl.com/bbc-snds-vin**

Between 1873 and 1875, the young Vincent van Gogh lived in London. This half-hour documentary from the BBC Radio 3 series *Between the Ears* explores the story of his time there in the archival records, and recreates the sounds of his journey from his job in Covent Garden to his lodgings in Brixton. Free.

PODCAST

### American Railroad

**silkroad.org/american-railroad-podcast**

This podcast from the artistic collective Silkroad is presented by musician Rhiannon Giddens. It uses music and storytelling to tell the stories of the diverse communities who built the US railroad system in the 19th century, including African-American prison labourers; Irish, Japanese and Chinese immigrants; and the Native American tribes who lost their land to the railway. Free.

WATCH

### Excavation-Confrontation-Repair? Family Histories Of The Holocaust

**tinyurl.com/yt-wiener-ex**

This series of videos from The Wiener Holocaust Library features talks by authors who've written about relations' experiences in the Holocaust, as well as explorations of the library's work including a look at the importance of photos in researching family members lost to the genocide. Free.

BRITISH LIBRARY / FEILDING FAMILY ARCHIVE

# The Dark And Dingy Underworld Of The Victorian Slums

SOCIAL HISTORY

**Bethan Watts**
*Pen & Sword, 232 pages, £25*

During the Victorian period, in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution, many of our ancestors lived in urban environments amid poverty, disease and crime. *The Dark and Dingy Underworld of the Victorian Slums* shines a light on the shadowy streets and dangerous rookeries of the 19th century. Although the main focus is on London, there are references to other parts of Britain, such as Edinburgh and Manchester.

This comprehensive and interesting book explores everyday working-class life in the bustling, and often notorious, industrial quarters of the capital, covering themes such as health and living conditions, childhood, employment, crime and punishment, and death. It also includes the more unusual topics of homosexuality, mental health and prejudice, and often challenges modern preconceptions of the past.

Based on contemporary accounts of social reformers, such as Henry Mayhew, and primary source material, Bethan Watts offers a well-presented and meticulous examination of the dark underworld, with evocative descriptions, fascinating detail and a balanced view of the realities of daily life. Her book provides a compelling and realistic context for family historians to discover what life was like for their forebears, as they struggled to survive in the city.

A passageway between two buildings off the High Street in Glasgow, 1868

**Dr Angela Buckley is a crime historian and author**

## Reader Review YOUR CHANCE TO ASSESS THE LATEST BOOKS

# Lady Dorothie Feilding At War

## 'Right At The Heart And Pulse Of Things'

WOMEN IN WW1

**Christine M Cluley** *Amberley, 288 pages, £22.99*

The Warwickshire-based historian and author Christine M Cluley has carried out extensive research into the life of Dorothie Feilding. By working closely with the Feilding family she reveals a unique collection of Dorothie's letters, recording her time as an ambulance driver on the Western Front during the First World War.

As Britain went to war in 1914, men rallied to the flag while women were barred from serving in military combat roles. Dorothie, however, saw the war as an opportunity to serve her country.

Dorothie held a privileged position as the daughter of an earl, but life in an established upper-class background somehow prepared her for the challenge of the role of ambulance driver in the Munro Motor Ambulance Corps. She became the first woman to be awarded the Military Medal for her bravery as well as receiving the French *Croix de Guerre* and the Belgian Order of Leopold II.

Dorothie's letters provide a vivid insight into the horrors of war that she witnessed during nearly four years at the front line.

Dorothie Feilding checks her information with French officer General Hély d'Oissel

**David Swidenbank, Porthcawl**
**David is an author and local historian who has been researching his tree for over 40 years**

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e ***wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk***

# TV & RADIO

**Jonathan Wright** previews upcoming programmes on history and family history

## Dope Girls

**BBC One and BBC iPlayer**
**Began Saturday 22 February**

Police officer Violet Davies (Eliza Scanlen) faces danger when she goes undercover in Soho in *Dope Girls*

Human beings react to trauma in ways that can seem counterintuitive. In 1918, after the guns stopped firing on the Western Front, you might expect Britons to have wanted a time of quiet reflection. Not a bit of it, says Jane Tranter, boss of TV production company Bad Wolf.

"The result of the First World War ending was that London hosted the biggest party that the country has ever seen," Tranter says. "Everybody piled into London, Trafalgar Square and Soho specifically to have a party that went on for days, that turned into weeks, and eventually months."

It's this time that forms the backdrop to *Dope Girls*, a drama that kicks off in the immediate aftermath of the war and takes viewers to vibrant, sleazy Soho, a dangerous locale of unlicensed nightclubs and drinking dens, hedonism and exploitation.

So what would draw someone to such an area? In the case of homemaker Kate Galloway (Julianne Nicholson), it's a case of 'needs must' as her life hits a crisis when she's widowed. London is home to her estranged daughter, dancer Billie Cassidy (Umi Myers), and so Galloway, accompanied by her other daughter, teenager Evie (Eilidh Fisher), heads to the capital. Here, Galloway discovers a flair for entrepreneurialism on the wrong side of the law that quite possibly surprises even herself. The scene where she decides to use the skills she learnt in a country butcher's shop is quite something to see.

The series' second main plot line is focused on Violet Davies (Eliza Scanlen), who faces sexism and corruption when she becomes one of the first women to serve as a female officer in the City of London Constabulary. Sent undercover into Soho, she finds her loyalties tested.

There are parallels with the first series of *Peaky Blinders*, but differences too. In particular, while that drama is so often about class with the low-born Tommy Shelby being one step ahead of everyone else, *Dope Girls* explores the lives and aspirations of women who refuse to stand aside just because men are returning from the trenches.

Both series, however, share a boldness. To quote Tranter again, the characters "walk with a swagger, they do not have that timidity or that caution that often characters in period dramas have. Our women strut down those Soho streets like they're Kate Moss or Marianne Faithfull, they have a modernity to them."

Metalworker Dom Chinea returns in the new series of *The Repair Shop*

### The Repair Shop

**BBC One and BBC iPlayer**
**Continues Wednesday 26 February, 8pm**

Few shows have ever made such an emotional connection with viewers as *The Repair Shop*. This is largely because of the programme's simple starting point: that, barring disaster, we all possess objects associated with relations where the cash value is irrelevant because of the feelings and stories the items represent.

Series 14 is airing now on BBC One, and we're promised 25 new episodes in total featuring a wide range of fascinating projects to tug on our heart strings. One episode broadcast in early February saw the experts get to work on items as varied as a lace dress; a drum used at Padstow's spring 'Obby Oss Day' festival; a clocking-in clock that graced a Dudley street-lighting business; and a polo bike and mallet.

### Archive On Four: No Blacks, No Irish

**BBC Radio 4 and BBC Sounds**
**Saturday 1 March, 8pm**

The words have become notorious: "No Blacks, No Irish, No Dogs", it is said, greeted far too many newcomers to the UK. But although the phrase turns up in many oral family histories, hard evidence for such signs being placed in the windows of boarding houses and rented accommodation is surprisingly thin on the ground.

What are we to make of this? Here broadcasters Tony Phillips, born in Leeds to African-Caribbean immigrants, and Peter Curran, who worked on building sites after arriving in London from Belfast in the 1980s, take the sign as a starting point to explore the intertwined history of Caribbean and Irish people, a tale that encompasses the horrors of the slave trade and enforced Irish labour on Caribbean plantations.

### Masters Of Reinvention

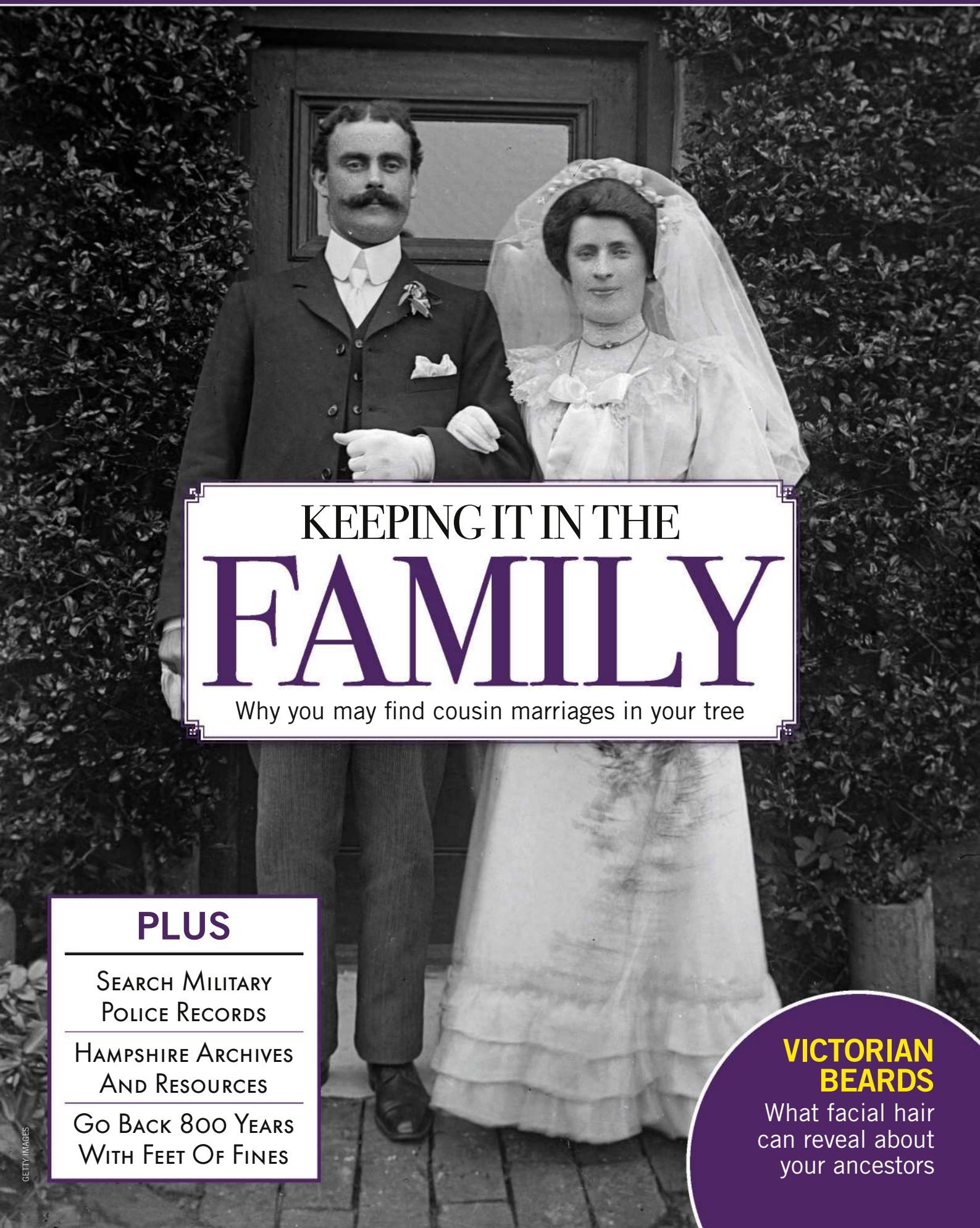
**U&Yesterday and U**
**March**

Published between 1933 and 1963, the monthly magazine *Practical Mechanics* explained how to build everything from bathtubs to aeroplanes. Can its vintage blueprints be updated for the 21st century? Mechanical engineer Dr Shini Somara certainly hopes so, as she leads teams of engineers, crafters and gadgeteers working out of a shed on a Yorkshire airfield for this brand new series. The challenges across the six episodes include a car, a pedal-powered washing machine – and a lie detector.

BBC/BAD WOLF/SONY PICTURES TELEVISION/KEVIN BAKER | RICOCHET LTD

# NEXT MONTH

Our April issue goes on sale on **Tuesday 25 March**



## KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

Why you may find cousin marriages in your tree

## PLUS

Search Military Police Records

Hampshire Archives And Resources

Go Back 800 Years With Feet Of Fines

## VICTORIAN BEARDS

What facial hair can reveal about your ancestors

GETTY IMAGES

# 'Kirsti Survived Stalin's Rule'

Anna Hyrske is fascinated by her great grandmother, who courageously kept a diary of life in the Soviet Union during repression and purges. By **Gail Dixon**

On 23 December 1933, Kirsti Huurre's husband Kari left for work as a Soviet Union red commander. He didn't return from his barracks that evening, and Kirsti and their two-month-old daughter Pirjo never saw him again. Kari had become another victim of Stalin's military purges.

Kirsti was born in Turku, Finland, in 1902 and, like many Finnish people, was lured to live in the Soviet Union by propaganda that promised better jobs and good housing. It was all a lie, however.

She wrote a diary of her life in the Soviet Union, which is an important first-hand account of some of Europe's most desperate times. It was published in 1942 but, due to delicate relations between the neighbouring states, it became the second most censored book in Finland (after *Mein Kampf*) in 1944.

Kirsti's great granddaughter Anna Hyrske discovered the diary when she was growing up, and has become fascinated by it. She has spent years translating the text into English, and it was published in October 2024 entitled *Under the Sickle and the Sledgehammer: One Woman's Private Diary from 1930s Soviet Russia*. The work unfortunately holds strong parallels with current events in Eastern Europe.

"The diary was always on my parents' bookshelf, and I first read it as a teenager," says Anna. "I remember going to Kirsti's house when I was a young child. I wish that I'd had the opportunity to meet her more."

Kirsti married in the 1920s and had a son called Poju, who was Anna's beloved grandfather. The couple separated and in 1932 she decided to emigrate to the Soviet Union, leaving Poju in the care of his grandparents until she settled.

On arrival in Leningrad (now St Petersburg), Kirsti visited an aunt who had emigrated from Finland a few years earlier and was astonished at her transformation. Once an elegant lady, years of poverty had turned her into an "old witch". Work was hard to find, disease was rife, and the family were forced to sell furniture in order to eat.

Her aunt's apartment was a stark contrast to the bright Soviet workers' homes depicted in the adverts. Kirsti wrote that "the kitchen (had) some unspeakable smell, stale and heavy" that made her feel nauseous.

Kirsti desperately missed Poju, and her despair was compounded by the realisation that the Soviet Union was no place for her young son. Some joy came her way when she fell in love with young army commander Kari Karlovits, and they married in 1932. Pirjo was born the following year.

The most harrowing section of the diary covers Kari's arrest and imprisonment. Tragically, he was executed by firing squad, and no one dared to ask why.

"Kirsti had to raise baby Pirjo as a widow in a foreign land. She worked as a seamstress and later in a cardboard factory, toiling by day and standing in long bread queues at night.

"Kirsti survived nine years in the Soviet Union until 1944, when she was able to emigrate clandestinely to Sweden with Pirjo. She was also reunited with Poju, but only on brief visits during wartime.

"I feel very lucky to have the diary as a detailed description of my family history. It had a big impact on me after I had my own family, going through the thought process of leaving a child behind.

"The best part of translating my great grandmother's diary into English involved researching my family's history at archives and libraries in Finland, and talking to my relatives about the past. It was so personal."

**Kirsti had to raise baby Pirjo as a widow in a foreign land**

Kirsti Huurre with her son Poju, Anna's grandfather

**ANNA HYRSKE** was born in Finland and now lives in Washington DC, USA, where she works in finance

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